

Femme Fatales

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FEMMES OF
"SPECIES 2"

SHARON STONE
ON "SPHERE"

LINDA HARRISON
SUPERNOVA

Volume 7 Number 2



Femme Fatales

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And also in the same issue, a look at why XENA, WARRIOR PRINCESS qualifies as the latest community's poster girl role model, including an interview with Renee O'Connor, who plays Gabriella, Xena's sidekick. Plus, a career interview with Daria Rigg, the first actress to play curvy crime-buster Emma Peel in THE AVENGERS, and a profile of German beauty Lindsay Gutcheleiner, and much more. Subscribe today!

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THE AVENGERS

THE MOVIE SPIN-OFF: UMA THURMAN'S A-PEEL-ING. DIANA RIGG DECLINES.

BY ALAN JONES

"Extraordinary crimes against the people and the state have to be avenged by agents extraordinary. Two such people are John Steed, top professional, and Emma Peel, talented amateur... otherwise known as The Avengers."

So went the weekly introduction to black & white episodes of a television show that became the first British series ever to air on an American network's fall schedule. Premiering on ABC in March, 1966, THE AVENGERS top-lined Patrick Macnee and Diana Rigg who—tongue planted firmly in cheek—battled the most stylized bunch of baddies outside of BATMAN. Though the Steed/Peel bonding was severed after three years (Rigg resigned from the show to make ON HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE), their fantasy adventures spanned two subsequent series and the Warner Bros spin-off which opens in June.

Producer Jerry Weintraub, a long time admirer of the series, hired former British journalist Don MacPherson to write the screenplay. "It turned out Don was an AVENGERS freak, knew every episode and was eager to take a crack at it," recounts Weintraub. "The final script polishing took 18 months because it was so vital to the plot to have that special brand of scintillating repartee between Steed and Emma. That's what primarily drove this movie. I do want to firmly put across how much we love the whole idea of THE AVENGERS. You'll see staff here they would never have at-

tempted on television. Until a few years ago, it would never have been attempted on the big screen either."

"I grew up with THE AVENGERS," says director Jeremiah Chechik. "It was part of my consciousness as a teenage boy in Montreal. The Emma Peel character certainly made an impact on me and there was always an energizing vibe between her and Steed. It was always Old England as exemplified by John Steed meets Swinging London as personified by Emma Peel. Steed was this unharmed, unflustered, always confident, very skilled gentleman with a wry sense of humour—qualities many still find inspirational. He's coupled with this mod, hot, sexually dynamic, liberated woman who's as focused as any male in that macho espionage world. The teaming of traditional man with contemporary woman creates strong dy-



AVENGERS: Uma Thurman, Ralph Fiennes. Producer Jerry Weintraub sat on the rights for 12 years until a script "was nailed down" to his satisfaction.

namics to begin with, even before you put them in extreme situations and up against an eccentric protagonist. Surrounding them with spectacular sets and action are further flourishes that signal a pretty wild ride will definitely happen."

So who were Weintraub's casting preferences? "Originally when I acquired the rights, Mel Gibson was high on my list to play Steed but that had a lot to do with the fact that we had a contract together at the time. And Emma Thompson, Nicole Kidman and Elisabeth Shue were in the frame early on for the Emma Peel role."

Ralph Fiennes (THE ENGLISH PATIENT) was finally cast as Steed and, notes Weintraub, "We got exactly the right girl for the Emma Peel role in Uma Thurman." Fans of the TV series are advised to keep an eye peeled for Patrick Macnee's cameo as "Invisible Jones." Diana Rigg, however, declined a cameo. Weintraub explains, "Although she read the script and is a huge vocal fan of the project, Diana felt it would be unfair to what Uma was trying to achieve in reinventing the role." □

Uma Thurman as Mrs. Peel. Her nemesis? Sean Connery's "Sir August Dreyfus." No heroine is influenced by Shakespeare's Tempest.



F A T A L E

By LAURA SCHIFF

■ What do you get when you cross a pop music icon from the '70s with one of today's premiere horror auteurs? Well, if you're singer-cum-TV producer Shaun Cassidy and director Wes Craven, you get **HOLLYWEIRD**. The aptly titled television pilot for Universal Studios and the Fox Network marks the much-ballyhooed collaboration of the two co-creative producers. Targeted for the '98-'99 season, **HOLLYWEIRD** follows the lives of two friends from Ohio—one male, one female in their early twenties—who have a penchant for the macabre. As L.A. residents, the duo explore the city's underbelly in an effort to solve bizarre homicides and deliver a weekly show to their local cable station back home. The crime-fighting team works with authorities to catch the criminals and help the victims, while recording the horrifying events on film. Cassidy recently co-created the NBC series **PLAYERS**, and co-created and executive produced **NCIS** for Fox. Production begins in late March or early April.

■ The fine art community mourns the January 22nd passing of Robert Blue, who died of brain cancer at the age of 50. Blue is best remembered as the man who rescued Belle Page's outlandish bridge photos from obscurity in the 1970s by turning them into legitimate works of art. His larger-than-life oil paintings of the Dark Angel were highly controversial and earned him both the ire of feminists and the admiration of many fans, including actor Jack Nicholson. In 1984, writer/director Bobby Roth produced a movie about Blue's life called **HEARTBREAKERS**. Peter Coyote was cast as the rebellious icon. Blue was recently appointed head of the Los Angeles Academy of Fine Art's department of fine art. My profile of this guy first, written for *Femme Fatales*. **Belle Page** dies (8/12/10), included his final interview. Survived by wife Linda, and a brother, he will be very sorely missed.

■ Producer/director Oliver Stone is currently developing a television series based on the Top Cow comic book **Witchblade**. Says Alan Chu, head of Development at Stone's Illusion Entertainment, "Right now the project is still in the talking phase. I can't say too much about it until all of the business contracts have been signed. I can tell you, however, that we're hoping for a fall '98 set date."

■ Centinel Electric, hostess of MTV's **SINGLED OUT**, reads her movie debut in **THE CHOSEN ONE: LEGEND OF THE RAVEN**. Described as "the ultimate warrior in the battle between good and evil," the film was recently picked up by TriStar, Inc. Electric plays McKenna Reeg, a cynical girl whose fortitude is put to the test when her sister Emma (Playboy playmate Shauna Sand Lenas) is viciously murdered



FF cover woman (8/12) MTV hostess Centinel Electric as the vigilante hero in **CHOSEN ONE: LEGEND OF THE RAVEN**.

Guided by Emma's spirit and her shaman father, Electric turns "vigilante superheroes" upon discovering that she alone holds the key to preventing the Apocalypse. Look for our upcoming chronicle, including an interview with producer Inke Allen, a former *Playmate* of the Year.

■ Her single photo, printed in FF 5 7 (page 8), still draws inquiries. So here's the update: Christine Lydon—best known as the Tex 9-talker blonde wearing the stars 'n' stripes bikini in Quentin Tarantino's **JACKIE BROWN**—is producing a film called **BLOOD GAMES**. Explains Lydon, "Two years ago, I starred in a movie called **DEATH GAMES**, about some people who literally get sucked into a video game. The producers ran out of money halfway through it. I own half of a video production company that does sports videos, and my business partner had the idea to buy the old footage and try to finish the project." Lydon wrote and shot a new script, integrating the existing footage into the refurbished plot. "Now my character is in a psychiatric hospital, having blown up the headquarters of a computer company while trying to prevent the whole thing from happening again." The project is currently in post-production.

■ Elvira (8/7) recently wrapped her starring role in **ENCOUNTERS IN THE THIRD DIMENSION**, an IMAX 3-D film for New Wave Inter-

tional. Working a song titled *Haunted House*, *The Mistress of the Dark* has the distinction of starring in the first music video ever shot in the IMAX 3-D medium. Price tag for the 4-minute musical sequence: over one million dollars. **ENCOUNTERS** will be released this fall at IMAX 3-D venues worldwide. Discussion of a TV series for the campy vamp is also under way at Elvira's old haunt, KCAL/Channel 9 in Los Angeles. Last Halloween, the horror hostess returned to KCAL to resurrect **ELVIRA'S MOVIE MAGAZINE**: via a 2-movie special. The show killed the station's highest ratings, prompting the latest round of development dialogue. Unfortunately, according to Elvira's husband/manager Mark Pearson, "KCAL doesn't have any money to spend on new programming. They're the only independent station in Los Angeles now, and their parent company, Young Broadcasting, is short on cash." Consequently, they've pushed back talks on when Elvira's show is going to start. It's getting a little frustrating. Pearson and Elvira also plan to pitch the series to Fox, Warner Bros., and UPN.

■ Continuing their monthly *Vampirella* series, Harris Comics unleashed *Holy War* last February. Upon completion of the first 3-issue story arc (*According to V*), illustrator Amanda Conner (FF 6/8), took a break and passed the pencils to Louis Small, Jr. Written by Grant Montz and Mark Miller, *Holy War*'s provocative premise opens with *Vampirella* perishing as the result of a fatal virus. She is later awoken by an underground network of holy nuns who serve as the *Vampirella*'s latest allies. Bonding together, *Vampi* and the warrior sa-lu-la battle parasitic vampires. Seth Baderman, head of retail promotions for Harris Comics, hesters to add that their runs are "very different" from the demon-fighting clay-figure-on-conceptualized-for-*Antarctic* *Warrior* *Non-Arctic*. "I haven't seen Harris' *Warrior* [sets yet]," says *Annie* cover, Ben Dunn. "Hopefully, Harris is original enough that they'll be able to pull off something completely unique. If not, I'll have to look into taking legal action." Coming in *Mel*'s *Vampirella* crossover with *Event Comic*'s *Punkster Jane*.

■ Twenty-one-year-old writer/producer/producer Katherine Brooks recently launched production on her fourth feature film, **CUTKATERS**. She initially made waves as a teenager, shearing her debut movie—**NO PLACE LIKE HOME**—on a \$7,000 budget. In her subsequent film, **BLUE DOOR**, Brooks cast herself as "a dominatrix who is trying to make it as a writer. She thinks that if she lives this lifestyle, it's going to give her the knowledge to be able to write a great book. The problem is, she gets really wrapped up in the scene and the drugs. Half the movie takes place in a dungeon, where she's working with clients." There's a secret twist at the end—but I'll be damned if I run it for you. Look for a video re-

leave sometime later this year. Brooks has also applied finishing touches to *ART OF SILENCE*. ("I wrote it about a mute artist that has a relationship with her dead sister.") *CUTTAKES* is a parody of low-budget filmmaking. "It was so crazy making an independent film that we decided to do a movie about the making of it." It's the first film to be produced under Brooks' Amazon Pictures, a company she founded with business partner Sharon Kofflerstein.

● **Survivor!** Cinema, the film unit that produces "sensuous soft" confections (*FEMALIN*), is grooming Kara Styler as their resident siren and spokesperson. "We initially cast Kara, a few weeks ago, in *VIRTUAL ENCOUNTERS II*," says in-house producer Pat Stoklene. "We're reuniting with Kara, the career moves that we tailored for Jacqueline Lovell [*EXOTIC HOUSE OF WAX*, *LOUTA 2000*]. The plan is to walk Kara through non-speaking gigs, then shall graduate to speaking and leading roles. It worked for Jacqueline—she's all over the map with her work for Full Moon, Mystique and Zelman King.

"We're signing Kara for 2 or 3 more movies. She's not only stunning, she's fit! That's a lot for the camera to explore."

● **Ms. Styler** is one of the critical players in a "Jungle Janet" shoot. The photo spread is a live-action adaptation of the illustrated, wavy web horri-tele (www.getboggies.com/CARTOONS.HTM). Janet is a topical explorer "who's good enough to eat—which pretty much explains why she routinely winds up in a cannibal pot... and the appendages of a woman-eating planet.... and, in a bit of role reversal, on a giant fish's dinner plate!" In addition to Ms. Styler, the "wild coast" contingent includes *Playboy* Playmate Shane Marks (www.ahmccare.com) and *7P* centerfold Verena Teier (www.verena-teier.com). It's all campy, offhanging, fetishistic fun. *7P* will print the exclusive coverage by next-summer. In the meantime, a comic book—*Jungle Janet and Her Sable Saviors: Cook Book #1*—will debut later this year.

● **Terrey Parks** and George Glover, previously cast in *ATTACK OF THE 80 FOOT CENTERFOLD*, have been recruited for *ELGIN'S EXOTIC ADVENTURES*. Helmed by Doug Ulrich, the film involves a loser whose misadventures—in a tropical fish store—captures into a



Kara Styler is performing dual functions: she's a spokesperson for Survivor's sexy Soft Cinema—and is equally juicy as one of Jungle Janet's curvy cohorts.

spectrum of bizarre fantasies. Yvonna Tierney, who's a likely candidate to be photographed as an "east coast" Jungle Janet, has been cast as a voluptuous temptress. The film's producer, Joel Denning, recently wrapped *THE HANDYMAN*, a horror film currently "being negotiated by the Triosia company."

● **Last month**, we announced that *D-movie* duo Julie Stein was cast as *BLACK SCORPION*, a TV series produced by Roger Cornman; however, we subsequently

learned that the actress is no longer attached to the project. According to Strain, "Cornman said *BLACK SCORPION* to Showtime at the eleventh hour. Showtime loves me but they felt that I'm already getting so much exposure, what with my Andy Sidans movies [*RETURN TO SAVAGE BEACH*, *DAY OF THE WARRIOR*, et al] that are on all the time, hence, they wanted to see another face on *BLACK SCORPION*. Roger's company was devastated when they heard the news, but they're

now developing another project for me—it's kind of like *XENA*. I'm not too upset about the last-minute casting change—it frees me up to do more feature films and earn more money than I would have made working for Roger." Strain recently auditioned for the role of *WONDER WOMAN*, the Warner Bros. TV series currently in development. "I don't think I'm going to get this part, though," Stein says. "I told them up front that I've modeled for *Playboy*. I think they're going to go for someone with a cleaner image. I don't regret doing the men's magazines. They got me where I am today."

● **The mono-maniacal** Danielah has been busy working with designer Mike James on a series of modal kits, each based upon Azimuth Design's comic book heroines. James sculpted Danielah's likeness into characters Birds, Bad Teatime and Crockett, the latter "a very innocent girl who finds a leather outfit that starts sulzing itself on her. She can't get the outfit off her and, once it's on, all these men fall madly at her beckon call. She's a virgin who doesn't want the attention." You may sample these collectible wares at Azimuth's site (www.gemilms.com). Danielah makes her film debut later this year in Fred Dion Ray's *WIZARD OF BEVERLY HILLS*. "Ray approached me at the Chiller Convention," recounts the actress/model. "It's not something I actually went out and looked for. It's really exciting and I'm very flattered." Danielah's official web page: <http://members.aol.com/danielah/index.html>

● **Actress/martial arts expert** Chone Jason (*aka* Tie Lu)—featured in *SHOWBOYS* and *DEMOLITION MAN*, and twice voted by Internet users as #1 Asian pin-up—served as the inspiration for Scarlet Angel, an illustrated super heroine. The character is pivotal in *Ace & Angel*, a comic book—developed by writer/artist George Delorenzo—which begs the question, "What happens when a crime-fighting duo finally becomes eligible for their senior citizen discounts?" For starters, the two neared causers herd the fearless job over to their daughters. In a strong showing of female solidarity, the Scarlet Angel teams up with gal pal The Ace of Clubs to pick up where their do-good dads left off. The first issue sweeps into stores in June. Until then, tap into Chone Jason's web site: www.ties.com



Yeah, Julie Strain had a role as BLACK DOOR-PISTON but she's got other fish to fry, including a more significant role as the sexy assassin PARK-11. "And Roger Co man's company is developing another project for me—it's kind of like XENA."

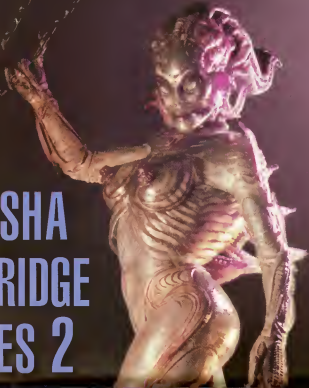
R&R: Danish embraces Azusa Design's comic book heroines, including Irons, Bad Yobitch & Chicklet—later is "a virgin who feeds a leather outfit that puts steel in her. Once it's on, even fell ready for her call. She can't get it off!"



● Creative Image Productions, in association with Martiney Pictures and Knight Productions, recently finished *EVIL STREETS*. The anthology spins "Tales of madness, lust, and obsession." Debuting in the *Stalk* episode, Sallanna Lee is a stripper who confronts an over-zealous fan. The beauty model, of ten photographed for adult magazines, was introduced to co-director Terry Wickham "a few years ago."

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**NATASHA
HENSTRIDGE
SPECIES 2**



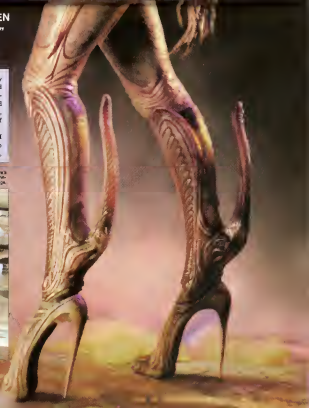
SHE CLAIMS THE SEQUEL'S SIREN SHAPES-UP AS A "CAT IN HEAT."

BY DAN SCAPPEROTTI

Few screen personalities have had the impact that the lovely Natasha Henstridge had on theatre audiences when she appeared as SH, the human-alien hybrid in *SPECIES*. Although her subsequent appearances in *ADRENALINE* and *MAXIMUM RISK* failed to capitalize on her potential, several people close to her new film, including the famous designer H.R. Giger, predict a rekindling of her career.

In *SPECIES II*, the sequel to the enormously successful *SPECIES*, Henstridge plays Eve, a biological anomaly created to further the study of the strange race from beyond the stars. But,

SPECIES II: Henstridge as Eve, a human/alien hybrid. "Even when she becomes the alien, Eve's human side overrules." Designed by H.R. Giger, the creature was "inspired by Steve Jurkovic's *MXC*. It "blends pain me through somewhat torturous experiments," notes Henstridge.





T: Director Peter Medak surprises Henstridge. Q: "You're an alien as you can be if you were locked up your whole life in an [artificial] habitat." A: Mary McCormack repeats her Dr. Bailey role from the '90 film. "We're the mother & daughter—but I'm also the 'experimentee,' so it only goes so far," notes Henstridge.



this time, she's not alone.

For three years the lab-bred Eve has been a virtual prisoner in a high-security facility where her body is explored for ways to combat the alien race from which she was derived. "I'm being studied in this habitat," said Henstridge. "It's the secret government thing. Coincidentally enough they have another problem with an alien. They come to ask me to help them discover and help track down the new alien. But during the process of helping I run into my own little issues. They have to do this radiation laser type therapy thing on me that is going to reawaken my sexual drive. And when that happens, I regain a lot of powers that I'd lost when they put them to sleep so that they could study me. They reawaken a lot of that and I become a little out of control. I have this connection and I'm drawn to this other character who plays the alien."

After appearing in only a few films, Henstridge finds herself in a sequel to one of the top grossing films of 1995. "Well, for being a sequel it was different which was nice," she said. "There are a lot of new elements, plus a lot of the old ones with the male alien and that kind of thing. That was kind of cool—the fact that there were two of us now and we're sort of battling each other, but, at the same time, being drawn to each other."

This is the first time the young actress has had to face an audience already familiar with her character. Or at least they think they are. "I think there are difficulties in doing a sequel as far as expectations are concerned," she said. "SPECIES 1 made a lot of money, and it was what it was, and it was original. People seemed to take a liking to it, for whatever the reasons are. This one is a different character as well, so, I guess there's some fears in that we won't meet their expectations."

At first glance the char-

NATASHA HENSTRIDGE

“I telepathically communicate with the other alien. He gets involved with other women, capturing and raping them, and I’m a little jealous of that because we do have this ‘connection.’”



After a couple of fogs, Henstridge needs a bit. “There are higher expectations from the people who saw the first *SPECIES*. It made less of money because it was original. The biggest challenge of the sequel is making it equally original.”

acters of Sil and Eve appear to be very similar. Each was created in a laboratory setting and each has the capacity to generate into an other-worldly creature. But Henstridge feels that Eve is a more complex rendition of the life form. “Eve is an alien who was grown from an embryo, one of three embryos that they had in the beginning when they found out about this alien DNA. So she grows up in this habitat and has never been out of that environment. She realizes that she’s human and alien. She knows the story of the first Sil. But she grows up in the habitat and they do tests on her. As they’re doing the tests and she’s helping them figure out new things about the DNA and the alien and that kind of thing, they, coincidentally, have another issue with the alien. They put me through laser and radiation, things like that, so that I can help.

“She’s very human, sometimes. I think as human as you can be being locked up in a cage your whole life and not having all the social skills that everybody else has. She knows a lot and has some contact with other people. So she’s quite human in some ways and she’s even emotional in some ways, but in other ways she can revert to her alien nature. She’s also at odds with herself. Even when she becomes the alien, her human side overrules. I guess you could say. It takes over her alien side and she’s, I guess, more human than alien in a lot of ways.

Reprising her role from the first film, actress Marg Helgenberger returns as Dr. Laura Baker in charge of the project that created Eve. In *SPECIES* Ben Kingsley, as scientist Xavier Fitch, had developed an emotional attachment to his creation Sil. But realizing her dangerous potential, the scientist decided to destroy the child he had created. Baker must also confront her emotional involvement in the sequel. “I think my relationship with

Dr. Baker, in some ways, is as close as it can be, under the circumstances,” said Henstridge. “In some ways, I feel Marg is my mother, but in other ways I feel, even though I’m trapped in this cage, like I’m more powerful and I don’t need her. I feel sometimes as though she’s very caring towards me and so I feel a maternal thing in a way. She has a lot of compassion for me the way people who are doing experiments with animals have. There are those people who can’t even bear to see a rat

hurt. Well, she feels that way towards me. I guess the fact that I’m human and stuff like that makes her feel even more close. I never feel that she is out to get me in any way, shape or form, even though she puts me through somewhat torturous experiments.”

The actress sees a marked difference between her two characters. “She’s a little more guided,” said Henstridge. “She’s a little more knowledgeable which makes her more human. Eve is somewhat child-

like, I think, but pretty smart. A little disturbed about having to be in this environment and seeing all these things that are happening around her and not being able to be a part of any of it. The other one being the alien, when her sex drive is brought back having this desire to be out of there. She’s like a rat in heat. So she’s sort of always battling these two things I guess. Sil was always sort of like very naive and very innocent. Eve has some of that, some of those qualities too, but I think she’s more knowledgeable. I think when she turns into the alien, the alien thing comes out of her, she’s much more clueless about that because she never really had that before, either, so she’s not used to it.”

When discussing the challenges of the role, Henstridge harks back to her worry over audience expectations. “It’s weird,” she said. “The only thing I can say so far as challenges are concerned is expectations. There are higher expectations now. I guess in some ways the biggest challenge is trying to bring in the things that people liked about the first one while trying to make the new one as original as possible.”

Although Henstridge’s presence is felt throughout the film, she doesn’t feel that the film is a star driven vehicle. “It’s really an ensemble piece, I think,” she said. “I don’t think there’s anybody in it really that much more than anybody else. I think I’m probably in it less than the rest of the actors. Patrick is a pretty prominent character in this one, the way that I was in the first one. It’s hard for people to get into the character if it’s played by a well known star. If you’re watching TV and you see people like Julia Roberts playing an alien who’s never been human before you’re thinking ‘But she was *Pretty Woman*’ and she was this and she was that. With a star comes a lot of baggage.” □

SPECIES 2

MARG HELGENBERGER

THE AWARD-WINNING ACTRESS, A VETERAN OF STEPHEN KING AND THE "CRYPT," KICKS ALIEN BUTT IN SEQUEL.

By DAN SCAPPEROTTI

As a youth, she was raised in a mid-American milieu. By the time Marg Helgenberger turned 57, her neighbors adhered to provincial values: marriage, kids, pocket fences. Helgenberger opted to haul butt in L.A. storm drains and bag herself her a sexually addictive alien. Cast in SPECIES (1996) as molecular biologist "Dr. Laura Baker," the actress found herself in a sleeper. The critics, as usual, were nuts about her though one reviewer grieved Helgenberger was "little more than an extra!" A scribe for *Movie Ramblings* prophetically rambled, "If the film does well at the box-office, chances are we'll see a sequel." Produced for a relatively low-budget, SPECIES' domestic gross was \$60 million. The alien is back, and so is Dr. Baker.

Born and raised in a rustic locale, Helgenberger rationalized that acting couldn't be equated with a viable future. Sure, she appeared in a couple of high school plays and was active in the band...but buy a ticket to Hollywood? No way. She dug the Mayberry scene "I come from a small Nebraska town



SPECIES 2: Helgenberger & Eve try to dismember an astronaut's alien contribution. "My character has changed from the first SPECIES film to the second," says Helgenberger. "She's wiser, a lot more sophisticated. It's a little more of a unique story."

where nobody locks their doors and nobody takes the keys out of their cars," grins Helgenberger. "I had a great childhood. I don't know that I'd want to go back to that small town environment, but I loved it at the time. Every summer there was farm activity to raise spending money."

But by the time Helgenberger enrolled at Northwestern University, she "took acting a little more seriously. I was more committed and I realized that if I could make some headway at Northwestern, maybe I'd go on."

Her first professional gig was RYAN'S HOPE, cast as "Sheehan Ryan," she gauges the grind of a soap opera "is not a very glorified way to act because it's tough. There's a new script every day. You have very little rehearsal and the material isn't terribly inspired. But you have to make it work, and people do. You'll have a week or so off every once in a while, while they focus on other characters. It's a good training field—in a certain way, I guess—because you get to learn how to work really fast. There's also a lot of melodrama on the soap

operas, so you're usually involved with a lot of emotion and crying and that sort of stuff. You get the opportunity to work out your emotional muscles. It also helped me to get comfortable with the camera."

After three years on the tearjerker, Helgenberger graduated to prime time, appearing in the likes of MATLOCK and SPENSER FOR HIRE. She co-starred with Margot Kidder in SHELL GAME, an '87 series that tanked after one season. But Helgenberger quickly recouped her losses, less than one year later, with a role as

Karen Charlene Koloski—abbreviated to K.C.—on the critically lauded CHINA BEACH. "It was a good series," recounts Helgenberger. "The cast was terrific, the writing was great. Every day was an adventure on that show. It took place in Vietnam during the war and China Beach was an actual place that still exists. It's a beach that was constructed on a R&R center for the soldiers when they had a couple of weeks off. Instead of going to the Philippines or whatever, they'd go to China Beach. It was like a weekend resort."



SPECIES 2: Helgenberger among pods that are covertly operated as a base. "We had a lot of laughs in the back set, the site of alien proceedings. There are some funny lines in there." The set was constructed in Columbia, Maryland.

"I was a civilian, I wasn't a part of the military. I kind of went over as a secretary to a colonel or something. That was my cover, but essentially I was a business woman with all kind of interests. And one of my interests was that I was a 'high end call girl' for mostly upper echelon personnel, not the grunts. Because of my high-end connections on a sexual level, I was able to convince a lot of those guys of other business dealings that I had. Some of these involved selling cars and another one was financing a beauty parlor on the base and that kind of stuff. I was always given something fun to do.

"Fans of that show—and there are fans of that show—tell me how unusual the character that I played was,

and how they had never seen that on television before. She was someone who was so frank about what she did, and didn't play it as a victim, and was in full knowledge of what she was doing and had no apologies about it. It's kind of nice to know that other people recognize that. I did and the writers did, but it's nice to be recognized by other people."

September 16, 1990 Helgenberger attended that year's Emmy award ceremony not as a guest, but a nominee *Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Drama Series* (*CHINA BEACH*). She had washed the presenters, Richard Mulligan and Blair Brown, would knock-off the cute hunter and get down to reading the winner. "I happened to be eight months pregnant," Helgen-

MARG HELGENBERGER

"I think Peter Medak (*SPECIES II* director) wanted to make a scary/gory kind of film. Roger Donaldson (*SPECIES* director) was more interested in making a sci-fi/suspense-type of film."

berger recalls. "One of my biggest concerns, once they announced my name, was getting up the stairs because I had this huge belly and I had heels on. Anyway, But I made it up. I had given my acceptance speech and they escorted me backstage, and through this maze of reporters and photographers and stuff. Even if you wanted to go back to your seat, you couldn't because someone has your arm and is taking you out. I remember having this feeling that I'm putting my trust in these people, and wondered what would happen if someone were to kidnap me. I don't know why. I guess it was because I was feeling exceptionally maternal with child and wanted to make sure he was taken care of."

The Emmy, says Helgenberger, "was definitely a boost for my television career in network as well as cable. I don't know that it translates that much into feature work, but it gets your name out there—especially on press releases where it will say, *Emmy Award winning actress*, so it's always a tag that they can add on. There are so many people, and the competition is so stiff, that it does help."

Helgenberger made her film debut in director Steven Spielberg's *ALWAYS* (1989), a remake of *A GUY NAMED JOE*. Spielberg cast the actress as Rachel in the story of a dead pilot whose ghost governs the love life of his fiancée. "I only worked on it for two weeks," says Helgenberger. "It was shot in a very remote area of the country called Moses Lake, Washington not that far from the

Grand Coulee Dam. The [1943] original was a very romantic story, so it had a kind of old fashioned feel to it which was refreshing. Steven was very supportive and open to me trying to do things. I was very nervous at first, because this was my first big feature and to have someone like Steven Spielberg as your director...you know, it was a little intimidating. I was in awe of him. I played an airplane mechanic. A young pilot shows up for pilot's school and catches my eye. I had a bit of a crush on him but, unbeknownst to me, he has a crush on another woman played by Holly Hunter. It's a little love triangle, I get dumped by him. But he's kind of a dufus."

Following the footsteps of high profile actresses (Isabella Rossellini, Teri Hatcher, Brooke Shields, Tracy Lords, Demi Moore), Hel-

Emmy-award winner Helgenberger (with Woody Harrelson) deserved better than *THE COWBOY WAY* ('94)



genberger performed in a TALES FROM THE CRYPT episode. Cast in *Deadline* (1991), she spent a week playing Vicki, a philandering housewife who picks up the wrong guy in a sleazy bar. "Walter Hill was the director on that and also one of the producers," explains Helgenberger. "He is a lovely guy, very supportive. It kind of had a '40s noir feel to it which is always a great period and a great style. It was a great cast including the late Richard Jordan, John Polito and myself. Richard played a down-and-out skid row drunk, a reporter who needed a break. He kills me off to actually get a story."

Helgenberger's ties with the genre also include THE TOMMYKNOCKERS (98), a TV miniseries adapted from Stephen King's novel. "I played a woman who is a writer," smiles the actress, "Stephen King writes a lot about writers. I'm hiking in the Maine woods with my dog when I come across something that is glowing. I start to dig and become passionate about unearthing this thing that's in the ground. It turns out to be a big spaceship that has crashed and been buried for many years. It has this effect on me, and other people from the town, that's akin to like INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS. We became consumed with this thing. Jimmy Smits plays my boyfriend, he doesn't succumb to this and ends up saving the day."

New Zealand's countryside stood in for the Maine exterior. "And I loved working in New Zealand," says Helgenberger. "I was there for three months. It's a beautiful country and the people are really great. The one thing that impressed me most was that the English people, and the indigenous people called the Maori, get along beautifully, there doesn't appear to be any prejudice or racial tension. The country is so far removed from the rest of the world that it was even hard

MARG HELGENBERGER

"The big creature at the film's end is so scary. People helped this 6'10" man operate the damn thing because it's so big. No acting was required on my part. It scared the shit out of me."



Helgenberger (2) made her film debut as Kath Davis, Richard Dreyfuss & Brad Johnson in Steven Spielberg's fantasy, ALWAYS. "Old fashioned, refreshing"

to get CNN International over there. I had to get a couple of cable companies or else you ended up with two stations that were broadcasting local news—and, in New Zealand, there's not that much that is newsworthy. Stephen King didn't come down, unfortunately."

I ask Helgenberger to comment on AFTER MIDNIGHT, an MGM release which featured herself and her spouse, actor Alan Rosenberg. Produced in 1989, the horror anthology was shipped into cold storage—and consequently denied theatrical distribution—during a turnover in the mother company's regime. "I played a switchboard operator working on the graveyard shift. Alan played a disturbed guy who keeps leaving more and more messages for one of our clients, who happens to be a soap opera star. It gets a little freaky and eventually you find out that he ends up killing her and then he comes after me. It's scary."

Critics have observed

that Helgenberger is better than the films which have squandered her talent (FIRE DOWN BELOW, THE COWBOY WAY, THE LAST TIME I COMMITTED SUICIDE). Though reviews for SPECIES were mixed, the movie spawned not only a sexually-parasitic alien but a sequel. Helgenberger reprised her role in Part II. "My character has changed from the first to the second. She's a lot wiser, a lot more sophisticated. In the first film, I was hired to be part of a group of people to track the Species. I didn't have a whole lot to do but occasionally make a contribution as to what would be the next step we take."

"In SPECIES II, my character is actually hired by the National Security Council to perform a study, and recreate the Sal monster by cloning her via a frozen lab embryo. I was hired to create an environment for her, and then to administer toxins on her to find out what would kill the Species if they were to return. People

are clearly giving me a lot more power and a lot more responsibility. Part II is quite a bit different from the first movie."

She had just applied finishing touches looting scenes from the SPECIES sequel. "It's a bizarre movie," said Helgenberger while clearing her throat. "It's a very unique story with a combination of odd things. There's a lot of humor in the movie, too. We were encouraged to explore the humor as much as possible. Some of the special effects are really graphic."

Ben Kingsley was Sal's father figure in the precursor. This time around, Helgenberger wields a maternal influence over Eve, Sal's biological clone. "After I've administered all these toxins to Eve, she asks, 'Why are you doing this to me?' One of the first lines I say to her is, 'Well, I've explained to you because of what happened with the first one, we have to do this. I want you to understand that the reason I took this job was to make sure that these experiments were done with a regard for you.' If they had bired anyone else, they would have just treated her as a lab animal. I'm there to sort of be her protector. There's that mother-daughter, creator-creation kind of relationship to a certain degree."

Any significant difference between directors Roger Donaldson (SPECIES) and Peter Medak (SPECIES II)? "I think Peter really wanted to make a kind of 'soapy/gory' kind of film," replies Helgenberger. "Roger was more interested in making a science fiction/suspense-type of film. Peter has a more odd sensibility, so some of his casting choices are not typical. The way his scenes progress are probably more unpredictable than Roger's—not to slight Roger by any means. He's a good filmmaker, but there is quite a difference. [Co-producer] Frank Mancuso has been a fan of Peter's for some time and that's why he hired him

to direct.

As one of the sequel's central characters, Helgenberger "spends a good portion of my time in the lab. That was a fun set. I loved that set." The production designer created a three-story barn set within an abandoned General Electric factory in Columbia, Maryland, not far from the *Femme Fatales* offices. The scale of the sets proved variable, ranging from extravagant to restrictive. "Because of the special effects, it's the kind of laborious filmmaking that none of us really enjoy," admits Helgenberger. "It just takes so much time and everything has to work just right. One effect is spent and then you have to load it up again, and an hour goes by. And the smoke and the gunk and the this and the that."

"Actually, this movie was different from the first one because, on this one, all the effects were just there. It's good old fashioned effects that are performed by puppeteers and staff, so we actually got to see most of it. In fact, the big creature at the end is so scary—I was scared of this thing. It's huge and it's operated by a tall man, 6 feet 10 inches. He's up on cranes. People were helping him operate the damn thing because it was so big. When it stands on its hind legs, it's about 12 feet tall. For some of it, there was no acting required on my part. It scared the shit out of me."

The finale of *SPECIES*, with the set piece of Sil's subterranean lair and its connective labyrinths of sewers, strikes a decidedly non-sentimental chord: "I thought the sewer set was kind of cool, it was very authentic looking. But then I had to get into this dirty, yucky water in the cave, that set we hated. They pumped so much smoke in there—all day long—it was horrible. Forest [Whitaker] got his head open on one of



Helgenberger as a mobster's widow in Showtime's *GOLD COAST*. *At* Her sci-fi work includes *THE TOMMYKNOCKERS* (1993), a TV miniseries adapted from Stephen King's novel ("Son of the WHISPER OF THE BODY SNATCHERS").

those sharp edges and Michael [Madsen] singled his eyebrows because he had to use this flame thrower. Actually, the sequel's barn set was more fun than the cave. The cave just really, really sucked."

Recently, Helgenberger did a marketing symposium for Showtime, the cable network that televises first-run episodes of *POLTERGEIST* and *THE OUTER LIMITS*. Last fall, Helgenberger appeared in the network's *GOLD COAST*. "That was based on an Elmore Leonard novel, and it was directed by Peter Weller and starred David Caruso. It was '90s noir all the way. I played a woman who was widowed at the beginning of the film. My husband was connected with organized crime, which I wasn't completely aware of. He states in his will that I have to re-

main faithful to him or else I lose out on the fortune, the inheritance. He hires bodyguards to keep guys away from me except for David Caruso. He had been hired by my husband to rob a country club and give it a bad name. He comes along looking to get paid off and we get involved. We cook up a scheme to hoodwink these people who are hired to keep me away from a life.

"But I think the last role I played, in Showtime's *THANKS OF A GRATEFUL NATION*, was actually one of the biggest stretches I've had to do. It's a movie about Gulf War Syndrome. I played the sister of a guy who was sent to the Persian Gulf and, because of all the chemicals and toxins that he was exposed to, ended up getting a severe brain tumor and ends up dying. The character was so far from

me, she was from Waco, Texas and a very religious person and very patriotic and a hellaver in family and America, not at all wise or sophisticated or cynical. Living in a city that's full of cynicism and a business full of cynicism, trying to just remove myself from that and be just kind of pure and go on faith alone—that was a big stretch for



me. That also stars Ted Danson, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Steven Weber and Brian Dennehy. The movie was directed by Rod Holcomb."

Before packing-up my gear, I address the Emmy award-winner with one final query: *whom would consider to be your role models?* "There are some role models that I continually try to be inspired by," says Helgenberger. "Gena Rowlands is clearly a role model of mine—and Shirley MacLaine. These are solid actresses who have had long, long careers. Most recently, a performance that I thought was just tremendous—and I was really inspired by—was Emily Watkins in *BREAKING THE WAVES*, which I thought was a very good performance and a very disturbing film." □

SPECIES 2

UNSAFE SEX

INGENUES PLAY SEDUCERS
WHOSE HOT TRYST WITH AN
ALIEN IS A REAL SCREAM.

BY DAN SCAPPEROTTI

When space pioneer Patrick Ross returns from the first manned mission to Mars, he is not the same man he was. The all-American hero is plagued by a nightmare he doesn't understand. Infected by alien DNA on the space mission, Ross, played by Justin Lazard, is driven by an uncontrollable desire to mate. He meets a pair of Washington debutante sisters at the Governor's Ball and arranges to meet them later in their hotel room, a horrifying high point of *SPECIES II*, directed by Peter Medak.

Cast in the small, but pivotal roles, were Requel Gardner and Nancy LaScala. After having sex with Patrick Ross, LaScala's character retires to the bathroom while her sister, Gardner, takes her place in the bed with the astronaut. While in the throes of passion, suddenly, to Gardner's terror, tentacles begin sprouting from Ross' back. Meanwhile, LaScala is wracked with pain in the bathroom. She crashes to the floor and proceeds to give birth to an alien baby. Both actresses had intense scenes with animatronic figures and special effects devices. Gardner, a veteran of such cable and television shows as *ACAPULCO BAY*, *RENEGADE*, *HIGH TIDE*, *SILK STALKINGS*, and



Requel Gardner & Nancy LaScala as debutantes who are involuntarily impregnated as alien DNA. "I give birth to the first species of the film," says LaScala.

WINGS had a close encounter with a dummy that looked exactly like Justin Lazard. "He is an alien and has to impregnate as many females as possible for the alien species to grow," explained California actress Gardner. "They're panning back and forth and my sister is in the bathroom looking at herself in a mirror and her stomach starts to grow and she's realizing what is happening and she's looking into the other room. Justin and I are making love and he starts to turn into the alien and all these tentacles are coming out of him. As we're making love I reach over and grab a tentacle and realize what is happening and I open my eyes and I'm trying to get away from him and I'm screaming, 'Get off of me' and he's trying to finish impregnating me with the alien. Eventually her stomach explodes and the baby pops out as I'm getting impregnated."

Both the sex scenes and the birth sequence are filmed as a combination live action and animatronics. Steve Johnson's XFX Company provided the detailed dummy of Ross that replaces actor Lazard in the love-making scene with Gardner. "At first I was with Justin," Gardner explained, "and then they switched to the dummy. They've been going back and forth for two



T: An astronaut (Lazare), who's infected with alien DNA, sprouts tentacles while making love to a debaucher (Gardner). **B:** Recovering from the man-rip-a-rear, the gal's sister (Dancy LaSalle)—who's been intensely interrogated—gives birth to an alien (via Steve Jabroon's KFX)



Tab: Primping for their final one-night stand, sisters Rachel Gardner and Nancy LaBelle indulgently engage in a sexual after that's deemed to "alienate" them. "I'm a senator's daughter—she gets whatever she wants," explained LaBelle



days. It can't be rushed. These guys are amazing. They constructed an entire replica of Justin's body. It looks amazing. The feel of the skin is so real. His mouth opens and closes, the head moves back and forth and it's all done with remote control underneath the bed. There are wires going up through the bed into the body. They constructed a whole mattress that they brought in when they switched the bed. Being under the dummy was very constricting because you have to be very careful because it is so much money. I have to be careful that I don't do something that I'm not supposed to do or touch it in the wrong way. One time they were underneath

and one time they were right next to me with their hand inside working the tentacle coming out of his nipples and sides and flailing all over and smacking me in the face. It was probably a total of seven hours under the dummy I've never done anything like this before and I didn't realize how much work goes into it. It gets really hot under there and you're constricted to a certain area and you can't move. I'm literally underneath this thing with my legs spread and all the wires are right there. It's scary because anything could go wrong. You've got a dummy that's a total machine. It's like being underneath a car and not knowing if it's going to move or not. You don't know if one of the tentacle is going to go haywire and wack you around. I got scratched up and beat up a little bit."

Gardner plays her role in an evening dress or nothing at all. "I'm not afraid to do nudity," said the actress. "I'm not afraid to show my body, but I'm trying to build a reputation in the business where if I'm going to do nudity it's going to be in a picture like this with the lead actor where it's a substantial scene and it's going to be memorable and build into something else. When you're doing nudity and you get on a set and you've signed a contract to do nudity there can be so many problems. They can tell you one thing and when you get on that set, things can change. When Peter Medak hired me, he sent me a two page memo telling exactly how it was going to be shot and what it was about. What he was going to show and what he wasn't going to show. He was very respectful towards me and what I wanted to show and what I didn't want to show. When I got on the set nothing changed. He took care of me, he was right there. He made sure that I had whatever I needed, whatever I wanted and if I was comfortable with the shot. Everyone was very re-

RAQUEL GARDNER

"I'm not afraid to show my body. But I'm trying to build a reputation in this business. If I do nudity, it's going to be in a movie like SPECIES 2. [Director] Peter Medak was very respectful."



LaScala tilted her "alien pregnancy" prosthetic. It's so real! R. Searl's Greg Searl escorts LaScala's chest which "blows right up."

spectful. Even the grips. Even the special effects guys. Remember, their hands are literally intertwined with my legs that are around the dummy and they're up inside the dummy and you know sometimes you can get uncomfortable with that because you're exposed. My whole body is exposed. Nobody made me feel uncomfortable at all. I didn't even feel that I was nude. Nobody was staring, nobody was commenting. They just did their job and that's what it was about."

Gardner's older sister is played by New York actress Nancy LaScala, making her big screen debut. A farm girl from upstate New York, LaScala has appeared in a number of commercials including those for Sears, Acura, Macy's and Anacita. LaScala was awaiting her call for the film's terrifying birth scene. Dressed only in a robe, the actress has been ragged with a pregnancy bladder device and, consequently, couldn't sit down.

"I'm a debutante," she ex-

plained. "A senator's daughter who basically gets whatever she wants. I seduce Justin who plays Patrick in coming up to my room and I bring my sister and we seduce him. I give birth to the first species of the film. Now I'm wearing the prosthetic for the belly. They blow it up with air as if I was nine months pregnant. If I bend over it can unhook and bend the prosthetic. I was in makeup at 5:30 this morning until 10:00. This is all new to me. Now I understand what it is when you hear about people going through all this." In production, LaScala flew to Los Angeles to meet with effects supervisor Steve Johnson who made a mold of her body for the scene in which she gives birth. "They had this big, huge vat," explained LaScala. "They take it and pour it all over my body. Basically, you can't have any shame. It's very cold and it molds and hardens very fast so they have to hurry and get it all on. It was a full day of body molding. They take that apart

and make a plastic mold out of that. I haven't seen my body yet. I don't want to see my body until we're ready. I don't want to see my baby. I know my baby's ugly because I saw the drawings. What a talented group of people. My character, I guess you'd say the older sister, basically lures him up to her room. We have a romantic scene and then he goes to my sister. I look in the mirror and the gestation

is so rapid that it happens in just minutes. I give birth with the pain and the agony. Everything is so real, the same body color, same tone and it just blows right up. It's exciting but at the same time it's really scary." Later, LaScala's dummy double is sprawled on the floor of the bathroom set while the actress' head and arms protrude through the back wall of the set. Off camera, a dozen unseen hands manipulate the controls that move the dummy's legs and the flaps of the stomach that open as the alien child breaks out. When director Peter Medak calls action, LaScala, who has worked herself up for the scene, throws her arms forward and lets loose with a long piercing scream. So impressed were they with LaScala's performance that both the director and producer Frank Mancuso came over to congratulate her.

"You have to shame when it comes to something like this," she laughed. "It's nothing like a commercial, that's for sure." □

REBECCA HOBBS UGLY DUCKLING

ONCE A "NERD WOMAN" ON TV'S "HERCULES," SHE'S A SULTRY SHRINK IN A SCARY SAGA SHOT IN NEW ZEALAND.

BY ALAN JONES

It bears repeating: "The Ugly Rebecca Hobbs."

That's what it says on the list of credits for the rising New Zealand actress. But there's no way you could describe this Kiwi cutie as ugly. She's actually drop-dead gorgeous. No, Rebecca Hobbs has just made her feature film debut in director Scott Reynolds' remarkable slash-or-thriller *THE UGLY* and the line on her curriculum vitae simply refers to that.

Some people say she resembles a younger Lynn Redgrave. Others say it's Emma Thompson. Most people, however, think she's a dead ringer for Sharon Stone. In fact, at Spain's Sitges Fantasy Film Festival—where *THE UGLY* copped a Best Director Award for Reynolds—Hobbs was often mistaken for the *BASIC INSTINCT* star who never she strolled on the beach in her abbreviated bikini, in the night clubs wearing her dazzling collection of stretch lycra evening dresses or wandering through the picturesque resort town shopping for souvenirs, Hobbs



THE UGLY Rebecca Hobbs as a psychologist who gets a serial killer. Director Scott Reynolds, says Hobbs, "Kiss my 're bullet' attitude. I got serious."

was never rude to anyone who rushed over for an autograph on the assumption she was La Sions. But they always went away knowing her real name and being equally besotted by the enchanting star.

The actress also worked her formidable charm on every male member of the collected international press, as she made herself readily available to talk about the movie that may shift her career into high gear. In *THE UGLY*, Hobbs plays hot-shot psychologist

Karen Schumaker, who interviews a serial killer to either certify him insane or prove he's cured. How the disturbing interrogation sessions begin impinging on her life, and turn increasingly dangerous to her own psychological well-being, is the thrust of the highly stylized horror shocker that lurches into the supernatural for its chilling climax.

"All my family were actors or directors," remarked the always effervescent Hobbs. We're sipping capuccino on the perimeter of

a pool at Gran Meha Sitges Hotel, the Festival's luxurious base of operations. Here, like everywhere else, Hobbs is turning heads as much for her lifting voice that wafts across the sun-drenched gardens as her devastating looks.

"I grew up a theatre brat," she continued. "But my family used to come home and cry, because they hadn't got this or that part. I'd watch them and say, 'No way, I am never going to be an actor.' Instead, I went off to law school, got a degree—God knows how, I never went to any of the lectures, as I was always out partying, as I do have a good memory though, which came in useful for line reading later on. Anyway, halfway through my second year of higher legal education, I got bored and thought, 'I know, I'll audition for a drama school and see what happens.'"

Hobbs basically got fed up with the Dilbert-like milieu of being a lawyer. She added, "Going to court and being a barrister was fantastic. I loved that. But it's only one tenth of the job. The rest of the time you're on the phone doing research and other tedious office-based chores. I



Locked in the psychotic Simon's imaginations are *Villains*, the writhes which drive him to kill "The film was an incredibly insane, intense adventure," says Hobbs.

was very pragmatic about going to drama school. If they thought I was any good, then I'd do it. If they told me I was crap, I'd concentrate on being the best damn lawyer I could. I let the decision be taken out of my hands in many respects."

Tot Whakaari, the New Zealand Drama School, loved Hobbs and her future plans were mapped out after one audition. "Then came the panic," she recounted. "Acting can be a pretty demoralizing and cash-poor career, and I worried about making such a drastic choice. But I wanted a career I loved, something I could have fun with continually. I didn't want to be desk-bound five days a week and only have a life at weekends. I wanted glamour, excitement—a blast—all the time. Is that too much to ask?"

After shining at drama school, Hobbs secured work immediately: "I was lucky because it's just as hard to

make it in New Zealand as anywhere else." A three-month stint on the top-rated Kiwi soap opera, *SHORTLAND STREET*, made her a recognizable name. "I played a lesbian Irish nurse. I did have a few passionate same-sex kisses but they were cut to shreds by the network."

Then, like practically every other actor in New Zealand, Hobbs landed a

part in *HERCULES*, the syndicated TV series filmed in Auckland. "The acting community Down Under has a running joke about how many times they've appeared as different characters in the series," she laughed. "I think the record, so far, is eight! I played a slave girl offering Hercules some water. I can still remember my line: *Hercules,*

you must be thirsty, I brought you something to drink! Rather than play it all sexy and breathy, I did my Nerd Woman hit and nervously stuttered the line so he'd notice me more."

It worked and also drew the attention of the casting agents who asked Hobbs back for two additional guest appearances. "Ekora and Katrina were their names. Katrina was enjoyable because she was an ancient—or in B.C.—journalist hanging around *HERCULES* for scoop stories. They gave me a videotape of *HIS GIRL FRIDAY* to watch because they wanted that style of dialogue delivery and manic behavior. The character never shut up and was always getting herself into trouble, falling off roofs and stuff. *HERCULES* is a great series to be in because it's so much fun."

Hobbs landed *THE UGLY* not long after she "got a casting call for the role of Karen.

Scott Reynolds directs Paolo Bonolis, who's in *UGLY* made as Simon. Hobbs: "The best thing about Scott? He doesn't pretend to know more than he does."



I asked my sister Jessica, a TV director, if she'd ever heard of Scott Reynolds. 'Oh yeah,' she said. 'And he'll absolutely adore you as he likes strong women.' I read the script and thought, 'Well, horror—okay!' But there was also a lot of reference to the visual style Scott intended to use and I didn't quite understand it. So as homework, I got out his short film, *A GAME WITH NO RULES*, from the video store to get a flavor of his vision. It was very interesting, very strong and I decided I was keen to audition. Besides, only three features a year are made in New Zealand in total, and you don't turn down the op-



portunity.

"I went along to the first audition but Scott wasn't there. It was in Wellington, not Auckland—where I was working at the time—and I had to put something down on video for him to look at. However, I really wanted to meet him so I flew to Auckland and we spent an hour going over the whole film. In that hour, I could tell we clicked. He rang me the next morning to offer me the role. He seemed to like the 'no bullshit' attitude I put across. In my reading of Karen, you could see she would stoop to underhand tricks to get what she want-

"I played a lesbian Irish nurse [in New Zealand's soap, *SHORTLAND ST.*]. I had a few passionate same-sex kisses, but they were cut to shreds by the network."



X: Hobbs kibitzes with orderly & Roy Ward (as 'Dr. Marlowe'); B: Hobbs; 'My throat is cut in the ending. It's either a nightmare or reality. We shot the scene at 4 PM and didn't finish until 10 the next morning.' © Paolo Rotundo as Simon.



ed. Scott told me later that every other actress he auditioned played it with a caring edge."

Actually, Hobbs imbued the role with mannerisms from her former professor. "I knew from cross-examination how to reel people out, and then reel them back in, after you've sprung a trap they don't know has

been sprung until well after they've dug themselves into a hole. I tried that method with Simon [THE UGLY's serial killer played by Paolo Rotundo] because I assumed—correctly or not, I don't know—that doctors and psychiatrists would use the exact same tactic. Whatever, it seemed to be appropriate for the part."

The stylistic touches that perplexed Hobbs when she initially read the script were clarified when cameras rolled in December, 1996. Reynolds uses three imaginative devices to keep audiences attentive throughout his production. First is the inventive way Karen becomes part of the flashbacks that she goods the tortured Simon into reliving. Second is the use of black maple syrup, instead of red stage blood, in all the murder sequences to keep the disgust factor at a minimum while conversely indulging in the most graphic shocks. And third is Reynolds' absolutely riveting use of the colors blue, red, black, white and silver—literally the only palette he draws from.

"I wear two outfits throughout the entire film," said Hobbs. "One red and one blue. The black blood caused a few problems. I don't want to reveal too much about the ending of THE UGLY, but it's a high-angled shot of me lying in bed having my throat cut which is either a nightmare or reality. We started shooting the scene at four in the afternoon and didn't finish until ten the next morning. We had to shoot day for night by blacking up the windows. We only had enough time for two takes but Scott really wanted to get it in one. Talk about pressure!"

"A tube was placed at the back of my neck and our special effects/makeup man [Richard Taylor, previously credited with DEAD ALIVE and THE FRIGHTENERS] told me I'd feel a rush of cold liquid when 'Action!' was called. 'Do not flinch, do not breathe, do not move!' Well, I was terrified! I was going to run everything. 'Action!' was yelled. I felt this horrible sensation on the back of my neck, and I didn't breathe for what felt like hours but could only have been 20 seconds. All through the next day, I kept asking Scott, 'Are you sure I didn't swallow?' It turned out fine and that black liquid mess spreading around me looks great on film."



The primary colors are blue, red, black, white & silver. Hobbs: "I wear two outfits in the film. One red, one blue." Black maple syrup bleed replaced red stage blood.

Hobbs admits to practically collapsing during that last 17-hour shooting stint. "But then the whole film was this incredibly insane, intense adventure," she explained. "I always felt exhausted after doing my shots. We usually did three takes in all, and the second one was my best in practically every instance. Scott would do anything, and everything, to rev me up to the boiling point to give my performance the edge it needed. I'd never made a feature before—neither had Scott nor Paolo Bonolis—and there was a lot of fear and panic that we used to the film's advantage. I hadn't got to the stage where I could say, 'It's only a movie, it's only a movie.' I thought everything was so real and I was often shaking when I finished a take.

"The best thing about Scott," grinned Hobbs, "is that he doesn't pretend to

know more than he does. We had two weeks of rehearsal before filming and, in that period, we established a relationship between us where we learned what each other's weak points were. Scott made me a promise that he would never let me walk away from a scene not knowing I'd done my best. We had an unspoken agreement that we were allowed to say any-

thing to each other in order to push us into the right stress. And the things we called each other....talk about blushing, when I think about it! Paolo was a nice guy when he started the film, but by the end, he was swearing like a trooper. The thing about Scott which I had never come across before was how he was completely prepared to use the same amount of energy

that I was. He often wouldn't stop rolling the camera while yelling, 'I don't believe in you, do it again!' But his fury never lasted beyond the word, 'Cut!'"

Hobbs would love to work on another movie with Reynolds. Since wrapping *THE UGLY*, they've practically been a double act on the film festival circuit. Although Hobbs has recently moved to Sydney, Australia—the director and actress routinely phone each other on a daily basis. "Scott is planning to make a children's film," related Hobbs, "and I'd love to do that so we could both show different sides to our work. I knew from day one of filming *THE UGLY* that we were making something special. There was this sense that anything we wanted to try, we could. It was our first go, no one could stop us. It was a magical time for all of us." □

The first victim wears a red blouse to highlight the "black blood" special effect created by Richard Taylor. Hobbs recalls, "The Black Blood caused a few problems."



SHARON STONE SPHERE

BACK TO BASICS: DEEP-SEA DIVING FOR BOXOFFICE
WITH DUSTIN HOFFMAN AND SAMUEL L. JACKSON

BY FREDERICK SZEBIN

Sharon Stone the name is synonymous with breathtaking beauty and unbridled sexuality. She paid her dues in silly movies like **DEADLY BLESSING**, an early effort by Wes Craven the director certainly wouldn't want his name above now **BOLEHO** and **KING SOLOMON'S MINES**, to shine in better offerings such as **IRRECONCILABLE DIFFERENCES**, **TOTAL RECALL** and the steamy noir hit, **BASIC INSTINCT**. As bi-sexual ice-pick-wielding Catherine Tramell, Stone became the sex symbol for a generation—with all the good and bad press that goes with it. (Stone and co-star Michael Douglas are said to be planning a sequel to **BASIC INSTINCT**.) Although Stone has proven herself an able actress time and again—particularly with her Academy Award-nominated performance in Scorsese's **CASINO**—it appears as though each film is a new beginning for the blonde-haired, blue-eyed for-



Sharon Stone & Co., a close encounter with **SPHERE**: "I have a great fascination with water. Before I did this movie, I also had a great fear."

mer beauty queen.

In **SPHERE**, based on one of Michael Crichton's best novels, Stone appears as bio-chemist Beth Halpern, a troubled scientist whose exposure to the alien artifact of the title could endanger the entire mission and the lives of those around her. It's a story of personal, deep-rooted fears, and how the main charac-

ters deal with them—ripe stuff for the serious actress in a \$73 million SF epic. She appears alongside award-winning actors Dustin Hoffman and Samuel L. Jackson, as well as with Peter Coyote, rap mistress Queen Latifah, and under the directorial eye of Barry Levinson—one of the finest filmmakers working today. It's a challenge that Stone was more than happy to take on.

"Sharon Stone is perfect for the role," states producer Andrew Wald. "As we said to her early on, 'The other actors are here to play, so hopefully you're up to the task, because if you're not, they will bury Beth.' She has not only risen to the occasion, but surpassed that because she steals the film in my opinion."

The bombshell scientist—like Raquel Welch in a Jab coat and skin-tight diving outfit in **FANTASTIC VOYAGE**—is a bit of a cliché in sci-fi films, but only when they're used to showcase their physical attributes over any intellectual capabilities.



"SPHERE" CINEMATOGRAPHER

"Sharon wanted to play the beauty. She said, 'I want you to shoot me from one side.' I told her, 'In the movie, we are 1000 feet deep, the power is out. It's not about you being glamorous.'"

The role of Beth Halperin called for both, as well as a hidden vulnerability to focus on her very human weaknesses. Director Levinson knew what he was looking for when casting the part and felt that Stone had it all.

"I thought that Dustin and Sharon made an interesting combination because they're so unlikely," he says. "In the psychological aspects of the story, I thought that she would be very interesting. There are times when you can't figure her out, and there's a sensitivity to her which works in this movie and will be surprising as well."

Stone's sensitivities manifested themselves in a very real manner within the context of SPHERE's underwater drama, as the actress explains,

"I have a great fascination with the water," she says, "and before I did this movie, I also had a great fear. I had such a great fear that I became a certified deep-sea racing diver. And, still, I was swimming around, looking over my shoulder. I conquered a lot of fears in this movie. I just toughed it out, y'know. I got in there, on the first day, stomped down to the end of the swimming pool, looked up, and realized that I couldn't get out. I stomped back up to the other end screaming, 'Get me outta here!' I had to keep calm. I did it little by little. And the dive training guys got me one of those jet things for the swimming pool so I could go underwater and come up quickly. They let me scuba dive and hang out with them so that I could do what I knew I could do."

"It's very frightening when you're locked in the diving suit," she continues.

"It's quite claustrophobic. There was a lot for me to learn because my character is a marine biologist and essentially when they're in the water she becomes the leader. I'm one of those people who, when I get nervous, I take care of everybody else. So, it worked out okay because we got in the water and I was cleaning off Sam's helmet and checking out Dustin and making sure everybody was okay."

The SPHERE stars not only spent weeks training as scuba divers, but had to endure many discomforts of the professional diver, such as the film's expensive and crucial airlock set, a real underwater airlock made to fill up and drain on command, as the actors had to deal with changing pressures. "You're underwater, inside the tank, locked in another piece that's part of the set," says Stone. "And you have to wait for it to fill up again."

Stone in BASIC INSTINCT, her most prosperous film to date, disappointing grosses on some later films may prompt a BASIC INSTINCT sequel.





"I thought men were complicated before SPHERE. No, men are simple. What they say is exactly what they mean. They go, 'I don't know.' They really don't know!"

before they can unlock it and let you back out. It was pretty scary."

Stone's fear of water work is based on a pretty primal source. "I have very bad vision. It was only recently that they developed disposable contacts you could swim in," she laughs. "I would go in my bikini with snorkel goggles with my prescription in it, standing there, trying to see and count the waves, and the goggles would get wet. It's disturbing to be in the ocean when you can't see

well because the movement of it is so captivating, but you can't quite tell when it swells what it's going to do. I'm from the East Coast, so it's cold in the ocean and you don't do a lot of swimming. Swimming isn't part of your life. I was never really a swimmer until I moved to California. In fact, I learned to do the breast stroke on this movie. One day, we were in the tanks and I'm like, 'By the way, can one of you guys teach me how to swim?'"

Stone was so impressed

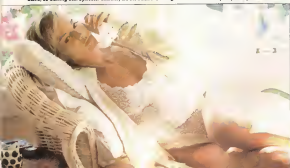
with the script that she not only faced her fears of water to do the movie, but also took a large cut in her regular salary to be a part of the SPHERE team. She even went so far as to call Levinson at home, and set out scenes from the script in his living room to prove that she was the right choice for the female lead—a statement her leading men on the film are more than happy to back up.

"I've had a good time with Sharon," says Samuel L.

Jackson, who plays mathematician Harry Adams, the first of the team to have direct contact with the forces of the sphere. "She's kind of nice one of the guys in a very real way. And she naturally has the kind of aggression that her character has, and it worked for her to be that aggressive with us. At the time her vulnerability is supposed to show, because of that aggressive nature, it stands out a lot more. It kind of jumps at you that this woman has been hiding all this sensitivity with all this aggression. It works very well."

"I met Sharon before the film started," said Dustin Hoffman who stars as psychologist Dr. Norman Goodman. "But it was like, 'Hi, how are ya? Nice to meet you.' When we started working together I knew she was a good actress because I personally loved her work in CASINO, and also I'd seen her in other things. But in CASINO I thought she made a jump. I like when an actor isn't present. I guess actors like that about each other. We all know what the scene is, what the movie and the script are all about. You can't stop your ideas from

Stone, co-starring with Sylvester Stallone, did the bare-bare thing in THE SPECIALIST (1994). U.S. gross: \$17 million.



entering your head and you know you're going to want to try certain things when you get on the set. Given that, I thought she was very open to everything that was happening around her, and I found her a very, very good actor to work with.

"I'm not going to say, 'So and so stinks.' I'll prefer to say nothing at all," Hoffman continues. "With Sharon, though, it's easy to say that working with her is like being in the ring. Or at least it was on this movie. You're aware that she's countering. If you throw a jab out, she throws a jab back. By the nature of our roles, we were encircling each other. Barry (Levinson) gave us the back story on these two people. Something that wasn't very kosher in Denmark took place between them, she was a patient on the couch and I was an analyst. We were shooting pretty much in continuity, so we would kind of work this into the story as the ideas hit us about this back story relationship that we had. That was intriguing with Sharon. I thought she was a very good piece of casting by Barry.

"Just as a sidebar, I don't think I've ever worked with any woman who seemed to be incapable of looking unattractive. When you see her, and not just on film, but when she comes to the set—she suddenly gets into where the lights are pre-lit, and she's just kind of looking around—you realize what a striking human being she is. She's really—I mean, if I looked like that I could get on the 25 sexiest people in *People* magazine—you know, I could have been a big star if I could have looked like Sharon Stone."

It's that look that helped Stone get noticed and, to some extent, contributed to her celebrity. She has admitted in interviews over the years that she has very much bought into the "Star" system of Hollywood—a "Look is everything" view that started the actress worrying about her future in films since turning 30. This

SHARON STONE

"I can't tell you how illuminating doing a movie about confronting your fears is. The bigger picture of the film is you can choose to be loving or you can choose to be freaked out."



Stone rehearses SPHERE with Barry Levinson. "In the psychological aspects of the story, I thought Sharon would be very interesting," noted the director.

attitude about her 'look' manifested itself early in SPHERE's production and focused on cinematographer Adam Greenberg (TERMINATOR 2, NEAR DARK).

The DOP thought a harsh lighting scheme would best suit the dramatics of the story, which was the antithesis of what the very image-conscious star had in mind for herself.

"When Sharon Stone first came to the movie, I don't think she knew what kind of picture she was going to be acting in," said Greenberg. "She wanted to play the beauty, and when I met her, she said, 'I don't want you to photograph me from below, I want you to only shoot me from one side, and don't give me any harsh light.' I was laughing at her instructions, but what can you do? I told her, 'In the movie, we are 1000 feet deep, the power is out, and that's what has to determine the look. It's not about your being glamorous. When you need to look glamorous, don't worry, you will.' In the beginning of the movie, when

they're above the surface, she looks very beautiful, but actors are actors. She didn't see the rushes, but she had woman friends in makeup and hairdressing who would whisper things in her ear. Of course, they didn't have any idea of what the movie was about. My main job is to tell the story of the movie. I didn't want to make something sweet and beautiful, when it needed to have a harsh reality to it. Later on, when Sharon understood what we were going for, she was very pleased."

Filming the underwater thriller was claustrophobic at times. "You know what's interesting is that I've been in a tiny space with four, three, two, one man. Me and men. Doing what they do when they're there. And in the beginning I had to say, 'Listen guys, reel it in a little. I don't want to be 'one of the guys.'" I mean, not be treated like a little lady all the time, but let's find some happy medium." It was very interesting to see how men are. I thought men were very complicated before

this. No, men are very simple. We presume they're being complicated, and that they're not. What they say is exactly what they mean. They say, 'I don't know.' They really don't know! It was very interesting to watch that."

Despite the science fiction aspect and special effects, SPHERE's real story lies in how the characters deal emotionally with the alien threat. "I can't tell you how illuminating doing a movie about confronting your fears is," Stone says, "doing a movie where you see other people come face-to-face with their fears, and everybody flips out. And you do recognize that it is a choice, that you can make the life that you want. You have the power to have a happy life, that we run away from a happy life and that, in the end, it takes more courage to be happy than any other thing. That's the real 12-step program. Today, am I going to have the courage to be happy? I think that's the bigger picture of the movie: you can choose to be loving, or you can choose to be freaked out."

Words to ponder, in light of her recent Valentine's Day marriage to writer Phil Bronstein. □

SPHERE: "It's hard work to do a physical movie. You've got to eat and flooding and diving and crawling. And my character goes crazy!"



SUPERNOVA LINDA HARRISON

CAST AS THE HEROINE IN "PLANET OF THE APES" AND ITS SEQUEL, THE EX-STARLET RECALLS THE CONTROVERSY.

By BRUCE G. HALLENBECK

During that mad, mad, mad decade of the '60s, she was an icon right up there with Raquel Welch, whose own voluptuous body—photographed for ONE MILLION YEARS B.C.—put a serious squeeze on a teeny fur bikini. Linda Harrison was also "into" fur, pouring her curves into a primitive, makeshift bikini and fraternizing with apes! Ms. Harrison—a former Miss Maryland—is indelibly linked to PLANET OF THE APES, a 1968 sci-fi classic, and its '70s sequel, BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES; she was cast as Nova, a mute, reegade human, in both films. Her celebrity is so firmly locked in the monkey movies that Harrison's past work—including BRACKEN'S WORLD, a 1969 series that foreshadowed CHARLIE'S ANGELS—has been forgotten.

Harrison is back in Maryland, semi-retired, she retreated from the limelight to raise a couple of sons who are currently occupied with the production of movies. I recently caught up with the beautiful brunette at her home, which is nestled in a quiet little town out far from Baltimore.

"Maryland has always been my real home," she told me. "And be-



Linda Harrison, starlet 1966. "I know that, wanted to produce Dick [Zanuck], most of my film roles would come through him."

ing Miss Maryland was my catalyst to go to L.A. Agent Mike Medavoy discovered me and took me to 20th Century-Fox. The first film premiere I went to was THE AGONY AND THE ECSTASY [65]—and I wasn't even in the movie! Pretty heady stuff for a resident of Berlin, MD, population 3,000. "Yes, it's true," Harrison continued, "but when I was a child, I dreamed of being in show business, so, for me, it was a culmination of that dream. I went to New York to do some modeling, and when I got back, I entered the Miss Maryland contest—and won."

She debuted in Jerry Lewis's off-comedy WAY . WAY OUT ('66); Harrison shared a brief cameo with the future Mr. Barbra Streisand, James Brolin. Then also came A GUIDE FOR THE MARRIED MAN, a comic compendium of extramarital vignettes directed by actor/hostess Gene Kelly. Harrison performed another minor role, as "Miss Stardust," this time around with Carl Reiner.

"But I must tell you, that I was a blonde femme fatale in an episode of BATMAN," Harrison revealed. "I played a cheerleader. I can't remember much about it, but I think it was called THE Joker / The Joker Goes to School,



Charlize Theron and Harrison Ford, PLANET OF THE APES. "Charlize was a strong, nice man who showed me how to handle the ropes. Now, my character, was a gentle spirit. I liked her, she's different from anyone else in the film."

But her tenure as a starlet, perpetually playing somebody's squeeze, drew to a merciful conclusion. She had briefly crossed paths with Charlton Heston at the *THE AGONY AND THE ECSTASY* premiere. Heston had a pretty good reason for showing up: he was cast as Michelangelo in the film though Harrison prefers to remember him as "BEN-HUR. I had been really impressed with Charlton when I saw that film at age 16. I thought he was fabulous. The chance to be in a major film opposite him was a dream come true. Our paths had crossed at the premiere, of course, and he was a good friend of [producer] Richard Zanuck's, who I had begun dating. I was under contract to Fox when *PLANET OF THE APES* came along. Yes, I was dating the head of the studio—but I had to audition just like everybody else."

In fact, Harrison initially auditioned for the role of Zira, the empathetic ape eventually played by Kim Hunter. "I took part in a screen test. The movie was very controversial at the time, there had never really been anything like it before. We all knew that it would either sink or swim. Fortunately, we had a really good director in Franklin J. Schaffner and he ended up casting me in the part of Nova."

Any significant differences between both *APES* movies? "There was a difference between the two directors. Schaffner never told anyone but the cameramen what the next setup would be. He kept an element of surprise. He knew we were doing something unusual and he wanted us to be fresh. It was hard to do, but it was really quite a brilliant technique; we all did our very best for him."

And Harrison was not disappointed with her co-star. "It was terrific working with Charlton. He was really nice to me. I was a novice,

"PLANET OF THE APES was controversial at the time. We knew it'd either sink or swim. But we had a really good director in Franklin J. Schaffner."



F Charlton Heston and Harrison on *PLANET OF THE APES* Arizona locale ("We set up a little city there."); J. Harrison, circa '56, waits out of retirement ("I'm interested in working again.")



Abiding James Franciscus, Harrison reprised her Nova role in *BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES* (tag line: "The only good human...is a dead human.")

an ingenué, but—to me—he was a big, strong, nice man who showed me how to handle the ropes."

The first film's Arizona location "was an awesome place to work. We really set up a little city there. It was amazing. And I think we were all a little bit surprised at how successful the final movie was. It's had a life of

its own for so many years."

Harrison describes *BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES* as "Fun. I was more experienced by then, and I felt that I had a lot more to do. The director, Ted Post, was a lovely man who was very excited to be directing a sequel to such a big film. And I think the appeal of those movies was

that it got us, as a species, to look at ourselves. The outer space setting was used to get us to examine our own dogma and tradition. So there were several more *APES* films made, plus a TV series."

And what was Harrison's personal perception of Nova? "My take on her is that she's a gentle spirit. She's vulnerable, but, then again, she's subhuman: she can't read, write, develop or think very much. This made the character a gray area, so there was plenty of room to interpret her. She was instinctive, and the more she hung around with Taylor [Heston's character], the more she began to learn. Her emotions were real and, by the second film, she had evolved. I think that she spent so much time with Taylor on that horse, that she ended up falling in love with him. I liked her. She was different from anybody else in the film. In my eyes, she stood out."

Shortly after wrapping *BENEATH*, she segued into *BRACKEN'S WORLD*, co-starring with Laraine Stephens, Karen Jensen, and Leslie Nielsen (as Bracken!). Harrison was cast as —well, as an ingenué who's trying to make it in L.A. "It really wasn't much of a stretch," she admitted. "But it was very different from Nova because I had to learn lines. Midway into the filming of the first episode, the producer came to me and said, 'Linda, you must learn your lines!' He was really concerned. But I became very disciplined and ultimately learned a lot. I loved it because it could be so glamorous. It was fun to do, and I could certainly identify with the character!"

Though the series' longevity was trimmed to only a season and a half, Harrison grinned, "It was watched more by the Hollywood community than by the public at large. They liked the inside jokes. We should have made it into a serial like *PEYTON PLACE*, but instead we had an expensive guest star on



BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES: Heston & James Franciscus (l) find an ally in Zira (r), whose resistant seduces the couple. "They will discuss you! And then they will kill you! In that order!" Heston recalls. "It was fun. Director Ted Post was a lovely man."

every week. So the show died."

Harrison subsequently popped-up as "Winnie" in AIRPORT 1975 and frequently surfaced on '70s prime time, with guest appearances on the likes of BARNABY JONES. Her final film role to date has been "Susan," which she played in COCOON (1985) and reprised, three years later in the sequel, COCOON: THE RETURN. "I was actually pregnant during some of the filming of BRACKEN'S WORLD," Harrison related, "which pointed toward my future. After 1985, I basically retired to finish raising my sons. They're both in the business now, with their own production company. Now I'm interested in working again."

She's still the recipient of fan mail, most of it about Nova. "There's been a tremendous resurgence of interest in the APES movies," said Harrison. "People have asked me if I'd be interested in being in the proposed remake [which is likely to be directed by James Cameron]. Of course, I would. A few years ago, I went to the FANEX Convention in Baltimore. I'd heard about it before, but when I actually went there I was a little overwhelmed. I was fairly used to people walking up to me in the street and saying, 'You're Nova'—but nothing like this. I've learned a lot about fandom in the last five years or so, and I'm very flattered by all the attention I've been getting. I'm always very

well treated at conventions."

The alluring APES vet is realistic about her career. "I knew that when I was married to Dick [Zanuck], that most of my film roles would come through him in some way. I never got my nose bloodied in L.A. And I knew that when we split up, that roles would be harder to come by. But I've got no regrets. Now that my sons are in the business, the independents are really important. They're looking for the right property, and who knows? It might be science fiction. After all, Dick's first movie as an independent producer was SSSSS, about a man who turned into a snake. Then along came a little movie named JAWS. And the rest is history." □

Charlton Heston & Harrison (l), in PLANET OF THE APES, enacted their roles in the sequel, BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES (by Harrison's "Neva" dies a martyr). "The appeal of those films," says the actress, "was that I got to, as a species, to look at ourselves."



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JERI RYAN, VOYAGER'S "SEVEN OF NINE," ON HER SCI-FI ODYSSEY.

BY ANNA L. KAPLAN

The ratings were sagging. But when Jeri Ryan beamed aboard STAR TREK VOYAGER as "Seven of Nine," the Nielsens shot into the stratosphere: Ryan—who appeared to be wearing only a coat of silver paint—was promptly christened a "cover girl," not only for the sci-fi press but mainstream publications.

Separated from the Borg collective, Seven was introduced to the series when she occupied Voyager for some human bonding. But her voluptuous presence stoked controversy: Was Seven functioning as a recurrent playmate of the week? Was she a flashback to STAR TREK's antiquated practice of hiring comely women as window dressing? Or were the producers

Jeri Ryan, STAR TREK VOYAGER's Borg bridesmaid, was no Elle Maguerran when introduced on the series (2). "I think the big question mark hovering over the character's head is how much of Borg remains in Seven?" writes Ryan.





Sampling the Best, Jerry
Joff has been a guest
of our TV conventions:
"What's so overwhele-
ing is how incredibly
passionate the [STAR
TRIP] fans are about
anyone rumored to be
associated with the show.
They just love you!"

“With the overtly sexual appearance of Seven, it would have been easy to throw her into a relationship. It’s why people balked at the p.r. photos released before the episodes aired.”

producers, perhaps misjudged, shooting for a more substantive concept?

Fans swarmed the Internet, debating Seven’s “character issue” even before she made her debut last season. Finally surfacing on the series, Seven was initially translated into a full Borg drone who was definitely no Cindy Crawford. Her silvershaded transformation was launched in episode #2, *The Gift*: her costumes, not unlike her psyche, continued to evolve.

Jeri Ryan’s contentment with her Borg’s sensuous/psychological development is unrestrained. Elated that her character has no allegiance to a “romantic rebel” stereotype, Ryan rhapsodized Seven: “With this character and the way she was brought on—the way she’s dressed, and the overtly sexual, physical appearance of the character—it would have been very easy to humanize her, throw her into a romantic relationship and then have Seven’s romantic escapades with various crew members. It would have been really easy to do that...that would be the obvious choice.

“I think that was a fear a lot of people had initially, and that’s why some people were balking at the original publicity photos that were released with the costume—before the episodes had aired. I applaud [the writers] for having the restraint to not do that, and to really slow down the progression and to keep the Borg aspect of the character. That’s the interest, that’s what makes it different and that’s what makes it good to watch.

“Generally, the rule is that you have to watch out for your own character on episodic TV shows—especially one with a large cast—because the writers don’t have time with that many characters. They’re more worried about the story overall, as opposed to the minutiae of every character’s development. So you have to be on the ball and really watch that. But I

have to say, I’ve been very lucky. I haven’t had to do a great deal of watch-dogging, partially—I’m told—because the character is so new and it’s so foremost in everyone’s mind. They’re still so, not only conscious of it, but highly protective of this character whom they really know. They don’t have to be told or reminded what’s appropriate and what’s inappropriate for this stage in the character’s development, which has been great. It makes my life a lot easier. Then I can just worry about acting. It’s great because we’re all on the same wavelength as far as the speed at which this development should take place.

“I think, early on, there were a couple of missteps, adds Ryan, “but not major ones. For instance, in an early episode—the third or fourth one, I think—Seven cracked a joke to Harry Kim [Garrett Wang]. I think we all realized at the same time that that was a bit premature. Then we sort of backed off. The other thing that we were watching for is the conflict getting resolved too soon. I think the conflict is what’s great about this character, and what makes her enjoyable to watch. It started getting a little bit too comfortable in some early episodes, and so the conflict has been brought back. It’s been introduced in different ways. I’m really very pleased.”

A facile resolution of conflict has often robbed VOYAGER of vitality. As an example, repercussions that might have arisen between a crew of Starfleet officers and Maquis rebels were never really explored. The presence of a Borg on the ship, even one disconnected from the collective, offers many possibilities for conflict between Seven and other races (sample *Day of Honor*): even more significantly, there’s ample opportunity to probe her dissent or rapport with crew mates.

The season’s first couple of episodes were fueled by the contentious relationship



STAR TREK VOYAGER: 1. Seven of Nine (Ryan) on the vessel’s bridge with Neelix (Ethan Phillips), whom she rescues.



between Seven and Captain Janeway (Kate Mulgrew) "I love Seven having the chance to get in Janeway's face and tell her she's wrong, and question authority at every turn," smiles Ryan, "—because no one else on the ship can do that. We had to be careful with their relationship. It was very much becoming a mother-daughter kind of relationship, almost, which is great. It's developing into 'the mother and the unruly teenager' as part of the last few episodes, which takes it in another direction."

The reaction to Seven among the crew has been mixed. Harry Kim, with whom she often works, seems fascinated by both her intellect and physical beauty. Seven and Tuvok (Tim Russ) share a dispassionate view of the human condition at times. Tom Paris (Robert Duncan McNeill) seems to be his usual friendly self, while Chakotay (Robert Beltran) remains suspicious. "Of course the relationship between Seven and Torres is fraught with conflict," explains Ryan. "Torres is not overjoyed to have a Borg on board. It's great fun."

While the Voyager crew and Seven are trying to forge a mutual understanding and trust, the beautiful Borg is called upon to save the ship: in *Scientific Method*, the Doctor (Robert Picardo) and Seven prevent aliens from experimenting on the crew, and in *Mortal Coil*, she actually resurrects Neelix (Ethan Phillips). "That has happened quite a few times, mostly just by dint of her Borg technology," notes Ryan, "—which is a lot more advanced than what we have, or had, to date."

In *The Killing Game*, the Doctor is again able to reach Seven, who is in the midst of war games on the holodeck with the Hirogen, a species of hunters. Neural implants have made the crew think they're Resistance fighters, in the middle of World War II, competing against the

JERI RYAN

44 | love Seven having the chance to get in Captain Janeway's face and tell her she's wrong—and question authority at every turn—because no one else on the ship can do that.™



1. Ryan outwits her Borg people ("I think the conflict is what's great about the character"). 2. Assimilated by the Borg to the daughter of space outcasts.



Hirogen. "We are completely immersed in the hologram, and the roles that we are in," nods Ryan. "They kill us, we get patched up by the Doctor, he sends us back into the holodeck again. The last time I got patched up, the Doctor tinkered with one of my Borg implants and adjusted it so that he's able to wake me up the next time I'm back in the program. I was in the middle of a song, came to and realized who I am. I'm the only one of the crew, now, who knows who we really are and what's going on. So in a completely alien environment that I know nothing about now, I've got to figure out a way to maintain some semblance of cover—with all of these people I have to relate to, while also finding the controls to the holodeck—so the doctor can access the controls, and turn everybody else's neural interface off." Seven is supposed to be a singer and Ryan, dressed for the part, actually did her own singing for the episode.

The Killing Game was filmed midway through the season, as Ryan was acclimating herself into her role and the STAR TREK universe. Aficionados of DARK SKIES realize that Ryan is no stranger to the genre: she portrayed Juliet on the cancelled sci-fi series (1996-97). Admirers can check-out Ryan's earlier prime time gigs via reruns of *DIAGNOSIS MURDER, MURDER, SHE WROTE* and *MELROSE PLACE*. She also landed roles in a couple of feature films (*THE LAST MAN, MEN CRY BULLETS*) and some TV movies (*COED CALL GIRL*, and *IN THE LINE OF DUTY, AMBUSH IN WACO*).

The actress recently paid the price for thosman who are tagged to STAR TREK celebrity: she attended sci-fi conventions in St. Petersburg, Florida and Chicago. So what's her spin on Trekkers? "The thing that was so overwhelming is how incredibly passionate these people are about anyone re-



Jaxi Flynn "I learned early on that comfort is a relative term in **STAR TREK**. But with every new fitting and every new permutation of the costume, it got progressively more comfortable. The one I'm in now is really fine."

motely associated with any aspect of STAR TREK. They just love you. That was a bit hard to get used to, that this show makes such an impact on people, and that they feel so personally connected to it. Their response is so warm, nothing but respect and warmth. Actually, these STAR TREK fans are a rare breed. I'm not sure exactly what it is, maybe it's the proprietary nature of their feelings for the show, because they do feel an ownership of the show that most fans of most TV shows don't.

"For example, when I was on DARK SKIES, my last series, I got maybe 20 fan letters. But since I've been on STAR TREK, I've so far gotten five big bags and almost every one of them says, 'I loved you on DARK SKIES'. 'I thought you were great on DARK SKIES.' They didn't write when I was on DARK SKIES. They write when you are on STAR TREK. Like it's just a thing that you do: you write to STAR TREK actors."

And she doesn't fork over her fan mail to a secretary. "I read it. I don't want to pawn it off. I've resigned myself to the fact that if it gets overwhelming at some point, I may have to break down and have somebody go through it for me and read it for me, and then I'll sign the pictures and send them. But to date, I have read it all, and I've answered it all myself. I try to send a note, especially if they write a letter. If they write me a letter and ask me questions, I try to write back and answer their question so that they know there is a person behind the face. I figure that if they can spend the time to write an entire letter, the least I can do is answer it."

Ryan's husband operates from Chicago, the couple's three-year-old son, Alexander, resides with his mother. "He's here now, which is wonderful," grins the actress. "He started school out here, so he's with me full time, which is wonderful—beyond words, wonderful! That makes it much easier.

JERI RYAN

"That got really blown out of proportion in a lot of interviews. I never fainted. It's been made to sound like the producers were there with a whip, telling me to get in there and suffer!"



"The writers are highly protective of my character. It makes my life easier; that I can just worry about acting." ♣ With EMH Doc Zimmerman (Robert Fierstein)



It's still tough that I don't get to see my husband except on weekends."

A change of wardrobe—specifically, a brown number—has relaxed Ryan's professional trauma. The full Borg uniform, visible in *Scorpion-Part II*, was so tight around the neck that Ryan blacked out a couple of times.

"That got really blown out of proportion in a lot of interviews," insists Ryan. "I never fainted. I blacked out, so I came close. It's been made to sound like the producers were there with a whip telling me to get in there and suffer. They didn't even know what was going on. I was trying to be a martyr, thinking that I was saving time. As soon as they realized what the problem was, they just cut the neck and the problem was solved."

Next came the silver jumpsuit with its corset and multiple ribs: Seven subsequently appeared in a brown, form-fitting costume that Ryan has deemed more physically comfortable. "I learned early on that comfort is a relative term in STAR TREK. But with every new fitting and every new permutation of the costume, it got progressively more comfortable. The one I'm in now is really fine. We've loosened the waist a bit. We've removed some of the vertical bones from the corset, because we realized that they weren't necessary—which is great, because I can bend. Each time we have a new fitting, we make more adjustments."

Seven's attitude is as flexible as her change of apparel, and Ryan admits that the Borg remains an enigma: "I think the big question mark looming over the character's head is how much of Borg remains in Seven? What is the connection to the Borg that still remains? We don't know. We haven't encountered the Borg again since Seven has been on the ship. So I think that's what keeps it exciting from week to week: to see that and to wonder—and to not know." □



Figas on Brevin's legs:
"We've loosened the waist a bit. We've removed some of the vertical lines from the corset, which is great because I can bend. Each time we have a new fitting, we make more adjustments."

Elisabeth Brooks 1951-1997

ONE OF THE GENRE'S MOST INDELIBLE FEMMES FATALE HAS
PASSED AWAY: HER FILM LEGACY & PERSONAL LIFE.

BY GIGI PORTER

"THE HOWLING was her first major hit movie. Elisabeth brought to the Marsha role exactly what was needed. She was a beautiful and exotic woman and we will miss her."

Joe Dante, director

[Long Beach, CA, September 14th, 1995] We had returned from the Palm Springs memorial service. Smoke from the white sage enveloped us, like a warm embrace, so I drew upon my Comanche heritage and performed the smudging (i.e. blessing) of Elisabeth Brooks' trailer home. The last time I smudged for Elisabeth was at the beginning of her courageous 33 month battle with cancer. It was only fitting that I repeated it at the end of the trail to honor her spirit.

On Superbowl Sunday, 1995, Elisabeth suffered a seizure while driving to the home of a friend who was also a physician. She had previously developed symptoms of numbness and stiffness on one side. Elisabeth ("Lisa" to her family and friends) was always ready with a hug. During our '94 Thanksgiving dinner, I accidentally touched against a bump on the back of Elisabeth's head during an embrace. It was the size of a golf ball! A sudden chill went



Elisabeth Brooks as Marsha Quist, *THE HOWLING*'s lewew title. Director Joe Dante recalls "lots of [Brooks'] dialogue was dropped [in the final cut], along with a weird scene of herself and Karen [Doe Wallace Stone] in the woods."

through me and, after much nagging, she finally promised to have it examined. She passed away September 7, 1997, in the company of her son and his godmother.

An actress by the time she turned five, Elisabeth was best known for her role as Marsha, the tempestuous werewolf as Joe Dante's cult classic, *THE HOWLING* (1981). With her sparkling hazel eyes and dazzling smile, Elisabeth exorcised the "horror movie" stigma that had prevailed during the '60s, specifically the genre's "sex begets death" syndrome and the "body bag" stereotype linked to women. Elisabeth didn't evade sex, she embodied it. Nevertheless, she was very vocal in her objections to scenes that required full-frontal nudity. In an *US* magazine article entitled "Elisabeth Brooks is Howling Mad," she said "I was signed to do the movie on my acting ability alone. I was told the sex shots would be smoke-screened by a bonfire and that you wouldn't be able to see anything." *Playboy* published the nude footage, without Elisabeth's approval, in the magazine's annual "Sex in the Cinema" retrospective. With no heat waves nor smoke, she disrobed near the embers of a



THE HOWLING. Breaks on the famous *Howling* trope. "Although [Breaks] was never really comfortable with the whole scene," recalls Joe Dante, "she conducted herself quite professionally. In my opinion, her beauty—combined with John Herz's photography and Pino D'Angelo's score—contributed immensely to a [erotic trans-feminine] sequence which has caused a lot of favorable comment but which, frankly, I was never very happy with."

modest blaze. Elizabeth was further quoted, "In the past, I've always refused to do nude magazine work because I believe in the Bible and have morals." Elizabeth later told me that she had a reputation to consider as a single mom, she was referring to Jeremy, who was seven years old when **THE HOWLING** was released. Elizabeth refused to marry the boy's father. "She lived for Jeremy," Marguerite Covatt (Jeremy's godmother) told me. "Even though we had different opinions on parenting methods, our sons grew up together and have always been as close as brothers."

And even as a starlet, Elizabeth balanced her career goals with fostering her infant son. While waitressing at both L.A.'s Roxy Club and the then-exclusive upstairs affixure On the Rox, she became acquainted with Hollywood high-collars, including Warren Beatty, Harry Dean Stanton and Jack Nicholson (with whom she claims to have had a wild six-month relationship). While working on-set babysitting assignment, she



was discovered by the actor Don "Red" Barry (**BLAZING SADDLES**, **STEWARDESSES**, **FRANKENSTEIN** 1970). It was never clear to me what specific contribution he made, but shortly after her introduction to the actor, she made her television debut in an episode of the NBC series, **EMERGENCY** (1972-1977).

Elizabeth subsequently earned prime time visibility from



THE HOWLING: Brooks' predatory view (3) juxtaposed genre stereotypes that played the viewer's (or woman's) cast as lovely (see) 4. w/ director Joe Dante.

guest appearances on hits like **THE ROCKFORD FILES**, **STARSKY & HUTCH**, **THE SIX MILLION DOLLAR MAN**, etc. She also landed recurrent roles on a couple of soaps, **DOCTOR'S HOSPITAL** and **DAYS OF OUR LIVES**. Elizabeth officially made her film debut in Alfred Hitchcock's **FAMILY PLOT** (1976), though her minor role is uncredited.

While **THE HOWLING** cleaned-up at the boxoffice, Elizabeth required a hysterectomy to recover from PID (pelvic inflammatory disease). The illness was one reason that she backed-out of **THE HOWLING II**, though initially agreed to do the sequel. But there was another reason. She told me that friend Kristy McNichol, an actress formerly tied to a popular

TV series (**FAMILY**, 1976-1980), had wielded some influence on **HOWLING II**'s failed salary negotiations.

Elizabeth and she had met Kristy while babysitting on movie sets. They actually performed together in a movie aptly titled **THE FORGOTTEN ONE** (1980). It was reported in the *Star* tabloid (Dec. 1994) that McNichol, upon learning about Brooks' diagnosed cancer, "ran to her side." Their relationship, while sometimes tumultuous, was very close. Elizabeth passed away only days before Kristy's 35th birthday. Currently residing in Sherman Oaks, Kristy attended Elizabeth's service but was too grief-stricken to comment on her passing.

Elizabeth had been virtually oblivious to her fan following until I booked her on public appearance circuits. Her final booking was at a November 1994 convention where, despite her pain and weakness, Elizabeth insisted on signing each and every autograph for nearly eight hours. Her **HOWLING** celebrity established her as a horror icon, even though she made only two other movies, the aforementioned **FORGOTTEN ONE** and Fred Ray's **DEEP SPACE**. Producer/director Don Glat hoped his **DINOSAUR VALLEY GIRLS** would be her '90s comeback.

Glat chronicled his first union with Elizabeth in a letter. "I first met Elizabeth around Halloween of 1981 at a function of the Count Dracula Society, shortly after the release of **THE HOWLING**. Our friendship really began in the 1980s. I met Elizabeth again at a screening of **DINOSAUR ISLAND** at the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, and [giggling] shortly thereafter at a party where I met Gigi Pottier.

"In spring of 1995, as **DINOSAUR VALLEY GIRLS** began to move into its pre-production phase, I visited the acting class (**ACT NOW!**) that Elizabeth taught in Van Nuys, California. Elizabeth had agreed to play Ro-Kell, the queen of the *Dinosaur Valley Girls*.

"The day Elizabeth was scheduled to come into my office to sign her contract, she didn't show up for her appoint-

ment and didn't call to cancel or postpone. We were getting dangerously close to our first day's shoot. Elisabeth had always been reliable before and so I began to worry that something serious may have happened to her.

"Almost a week later, someone dropped by my office and told me about Elisabeth's sudden and unexpected cancer. Elisabeth had hoped to beat this problem on her own and still intended to do the [movie], not wanting to disappoint me. Obviously, strong as she was, she wasn't strong enough.



"The last time I saw her was at a Thanksgiving dinner in 1995. She told me then that she was seeking various possible alternative cures, including an Indian Shaman in Arizona, and that she was determined not to die. Her determination, and probably other factors, are what kept her alive for two more years. Most of her friends, myself included, heard little news from or about her during that time.

Elisabeth was one of a kind. She loved her Jack Daniels "neat." She smoked—a lot. She loved both to hear, and to create, gossip. When she was ticked-off, her language could make a sailor blush. Canadian born, she was adopted by William and Joan Layles. William died from cancer only six months prior to Elisabeth's passing. Even though her family moved around, Elisabeth basically grew up in the San Fernando Valley with her brother Judeen and sister Joana. "She was a different person unto herself," her aunt Sybil Brooks Duncan told me. "When she was a kid, she always said she wanted to grow up to be an Indian boy." Elisabeth was much

"Elisabeth loved her Jack Daniels 'neat'. She smoked a lot. She loved to hear and create gossip. And when ticked-off, her language could make a sailor blush."



Produced for \$1.6 million, *THE HOWLING*'s U.S. gross was \$16 million. Brooks (l) declined a role in the sequel. *L*: Increased over the film's "sex scene," Brooks insisted, "I was told they'd be censored so you wouldn't see anything."

endowed to Native American ways and traditions, often satisfying her quest for knowledge with magazines, books and spoken stories. She sought to surround herself in life with all things spiritual and meaningful. One could often find the King James Bible right next to a copy of *Rolling Stone*, *National Enquirer*, *Hollywood Reporter* or *Native American Indian Journal*.

One moment, she was calculating tips on a dinner ticket to the cent, and the next she was giving you the shirt off her back. I recall one incident involving a young couple from the Midwest: they were students of hers trying to crack "show business." Scheduled for eviction from their North Hollywood apartment, they planned to live in their car (which had broken down). Things got even worse: the girl found out that she was pregnant, and the couple survived on a steady diet of candy bars. It was a story that played out so many times before, and rarely with a happy ending. Elisabeth called me over to fix them dinner, and then she slapped them \$500. They re-

turned east the next day, completely unaware that she had borrowed the money because her own rent was due. The very next night, we were riding in a limo... go figure.

I was devastated when told in January '95, about Elisabeth's stroke. I also learned that she had been diagnosed with four or five brain tumors. I later found some comfort in the counsel of a good friend, actor Walter Koenig, whose own brother had died from a similar condition. I was crushed that Elisabeth kept everyone at arm's length upon learning about her diagnosis.

Not unlike the late Mr. Brooks, her memorial services were elegant yet earthy. Surrounded by Elisabeth's friends and family, her son Jeremy recalled the conclusive years: "My mom was a true warrior. She had survived four brain surgeries and chemotherapy. When the doctors told her she only had four months to live, she told them, 'No way' and she defied them by fighting for almost three years. My mom was the most courageous person I've ever known. Although some folks might not think it

appropriate, I want to share her last moments with you.

"Mom was a real tiger. She lay in her bed at the Haven Hospice in Palm Springs with me and my godmother. Her lungs had begun to fill with fluid but she was still trying to hang on. Finally, I held her head in my hands, looked into her eyes and said, 'Mom, if you can see a light, let go. If you can see Grandpa, go to him. I'm fine, we're fine: now, relax and just let go.' A single tear rolled down her cheek. She let out one last sigh and she was gone. I ran outside and yelled out 'M-O-M-M-M-M-M!' as long and as loud as I could. I guess a lot like a Klingon warrior from *STAR TREK*." One almost expected to hear Elisabeth's sensuous, whiskey-inflected chuckle.

Her family graciously allowed me to speak at her service. As I stood there, all I could think of was that this was not saying good-bye, but welcoming her into a new life—free and without pain. I related to everyone how Elisabeth and I were in a same one day—she insisted I perform the Indian prayers for the sweetledge. "This isn't a sweetledge, Elisabeth," I told her.

"Hey," she said "a sweet's a sweet."

That got a chuckle from everyone. And then I realized that Elisabeth hadn't tried to "shut us out" as she went through her final battle. She had just wanted us to preserve an image of her as the sexy, class, gutsy lady she had been in life. And so it is. □

One of Brooks' final public appearances. As a result of illness, she bowed out of *DINOBAIR VALLEY GIRLS*.



GINGER LYNN ALLEN

She certainly doesn't look like an ex-porn diva. Fresh-scrubbed and irradiating a girl-next-door sex appeal, Ginger Lynn Allen could pass as a recruiter for the Knights of Columbus. The actress, who made the cross-over to R-rated burlesque a decade ago with VICE ACADEMY, has become a fixture in B-movies. "I guess I was viewed—and still am—as a sex symbol," Allen told *Female Fantasies* in 1993 (2-1). "Somewhere along the way, I lost my identity as a woman; as a person with a brain and feelings. But it's over and done with. Let's move on."

And, one year later, she rekindled her celebrity with an interactive CD game. The medium is full of X-rated divas, but Allen opted for some sci-fi extravagance with WING COMMANDER III: HEART OF THE TIGER. In lieu of moaning and heavy breathing, she was working with the likes of Tim Curry, Mark Hamill, John Rhy-Davies and Malcolm McDowell.

Debuting in 1989, WING COMMANDER—the first simulated 3-D space flight game—earned enough revenue to spawn a sequel the following year. Allen was cast as Chief Technician Rachel Coriolis when the franchise turned into a trilogy. The saga involved "Earth being overrun by the cat-like race of the Kilrathi" and the Terran Confederation delegating "the one man qualified enough to destroy planet Kilrah." It was fueled by a p.r. blitz, and ENTERTAINMENT TONIGHT was on

CROSSING FROM "X" TO CD,
SHE'S INTERACTIVE IN SCI-FI.

BY CRAIG RED



SOUND AND GAGGED: A LOVE STORY. Elizabeth Seltzer/Allen, Chris Madely. Cast as a loveless, Allen pegs the black comedy as her personal favorite

the set interviewing Allen, "a pivotal player in the lavish interactive game, produced for millions."

Two years later, another sequel—WING COMMANDER: THE PATH OF FREEDOM—hit the shelves but Allen's absence in the game was conspicuous. Why wasn't she hired to reprise the Coriolis role? "It just made good sense," explains producer Dave Downing. "Ginger was the lead in WING COMMANDER III and it was

great to have her back in WING COMMANDER. PROPHECY (aka WING COMMANDER V) which was released last year. She wasn't in Part 4 because it was a different story with different action, but she was quite a draw based on our consumer interest. We felt that she was something we could use from a marketing angle, and have for the interest of the young men."

Ms. Allen opens the interview by insisting that I just call her Ginger. "I'm a nice girl from Rockford, Illinois and here we go by first names." I mentioned that, as a student of entomology at the University of Illinois, I lived in the state for over nine years. Next thing you know, we're rapping about bugs, corn and soybean pests and her current ant problem. In regard to the latter, she jokes, "I'm a great cook. I think that they just keep coming back for my cooking. It's a huge colony. I don't like the spraying of pesticide because I have a three-month-old baby, a dog and a cat."

After shifting into a description of her WING COMMANDER femme, Ginger noted, "Rachel is the Chief Technician on the ship, and she is kind of a tough, lalkey, confident, cocky kind of gal. She is not someone that you would really want to mess with and she knows what she is doing. She is in charge, she loves her weapons and keeps the ship up and running. She was introduced in WING COMMANDER III, but things got a bit overwhelming at the time—and she was quite new at the time—so



GINGER L. ALLEN

“WING COMMANDER was a wonderful experience. I rarely play tough girls & Rachel was a bitch.”

“If I were a man, I don't know that I'd be able to go out with me,” admits Allen. Reflective of her past part, she notes: “A lot of doors were closed. People are always going to talk & have their preconceived notions.”

Rachel went on hiatus and went after a more prominent position. So she came back on this mission, WING COMMANDER V, and is more mature and has really come into her own as a woman and as a technician.”

I can't help interject that “went on hiatus” sounds like a euphemism which translates to “wasn't hired.” Ginger giggles. “What I am saying is that everybody missed me in Part IV and I am back in Part V by popular demand. I was amazed. I have a PC, but I'm not a hacker. WING COMMANDER is the first experience I've had with this kind of project, and I had no idea of how popular CD games are. Playing the actual game, I crushed and burned-up in no more than two seconds—as soon as I got out into flight. I was never one to even play with old video games like Pac-Man or the tennis game. When I turn on my computer now, I have two options: one is the standard and the other is WING COMMAN-

DER III. It takes up a lot of memory space because it is so advanced and much is going on in it. I do my own Website (www.gingerlynn.com) and, by chatting on-line, I discovered that so many people play the game and love the character. For me it was a wonderful experience. I rarely get to play a tough girl. I am somewhat of a small woman, and I have this girl-next-door face and come across as very nice.

WING COMMANDER V: Neil Berry, Allen & Steven Petroski. “There's different endings depending how one plays the game. I liked the camaraderie between the characters. It's more about how I impacted when they don't come back.”



“And WC-3 didn't have what I like about this one, specifically, camaraderie between the characters. It's more of how it affects you when they don't come back from their missions. It has especially impacted Rachel. She gets the ships ready and every ship that doesn't come back is like suffering the loss of one of her babies. Although she is tough on the outside, she suffers on the inside because she cares now much more than she did before. I loved that I was able to grow as Rachel has grown in this one. The challenge is Rachel continuously

being tough and doing her job: be compassionate but don't let the loss of a friend get to her too much."

Ginger's film career has branched every genre: Western (YOUNG GUNS II), horror (BURIED ALIVE, "It was horrible!"), and T&A comedy (VICE ACADEMY I-III). Most grievous experience: her role as a victim in MIND, BODY & SOUL. ("The worst film I've ever done...it spurt me to the point of tears.") Best experience: her role as a bisexual, divided between an obsessive girlfriend and an abusive husband, in BOUND & GAGGED: A LOVE STORY. ("It's not the blonde bimbo. I was able to create a character who had a lot of depth. She was strong, insecure, weak, intelligent.") The latter film primed her for GOD'S LONELY MAN, a film starring Justine Bateman which Ginger describes as "A TAXI DRIVER for the '90s."

"I'm the only one in the movie who has redeeming qualities. I play a recovering alcoholic who speaks at meetings and helps people get their shit together." (She abruptly sicks as a gale of breath. Her eyes ache.) "I don't know if I can say that but I just did. Meet of the characters in the film are drug addicts, prostitutes, alcoholics, pimps and murderers. There are really no good guys in this film. Actually, I am the good guy. I don't kill anybody, I don't do drugs. I guess that makes me the good character."

She also played in THE STRANGER (1994), HBO's retread of HIGH PLAINS DRIFTER she comments, "Kathy Long was in it. But rather than cowboys it is bikers. I play a town bitch. No fights in that one but I am good with a gun but I am hoping to do something more where I have some physical action in the future."

No stranger to television, Ginger has been hired for guest appearances (SUPERFORCE, HARD BALL, SUNSET BEACH, SILK STALKINGS) and played a recurrent role on NYPD BLUE. Not bad for someone who, back in 1982, transplanted herself from Rockford to L.A. with absolutely no acting aspirations. "I just sort of fell into it," she recalls. "I was cast in a B-movie, it was a small role, and then someone got me into something else and it just snowballed. Fortunately, I've been working pretty consistently."

Though no longer yielding to the porno industry, does Ginger consider her frequent nudity in B-films as some sort of compromise? "I haven't done



Reliving on set of WING COMMANDER: PROPHECY (Part V). "Everyone abused me in WC-4 and I'm back by popular demand. So many people love the game and my character."

anything adult in 11 years. My films as Ginger Lynn are still popular, and you can rent them and they are big sellers. But I have broken away from that. I do get really excited when someone comes up to me and recognizes me. I mean, I believe that [the X-rated films] were educational and may have helped people spice up their lives. I really had a wonderful time doing that. So many people have such a negative stereotype, a negative judgement of what these films were about. Some of them are better than others and I do think they have their place in society. I don't have a problem doing nudity in B-films. You see, it's very natural. I was born that way and will probably be buried that way. But if you want action, then watch WING COMMANDER. If you want to laugh, watch a comedy. If you want to cry? Watch a drama. And if you want to get turned on, watch an adult film. Every type of film has its own following and audience. At this point I have run the gamut, I have done them all."

Ginger's personal life is preoccupied with Sterling, her three-month old son. Does she have any concerns that he'll eventually be exposed to her porno flicks? "By the time he reaches an age where he would ask about it,

he may be nine. That means that I have done these films 20 years ago and, by then, I hope that I am not popular in the adult industry. But I will try to have a positive, loving, wise attitude about it. Yes, I do get bothered by women's and religious groups, but my attitude is "If you know me and don't like me, that's fine. But if you don't know me, then you have no place to judge me at all." But it can be difficult in personal relationships. I am a single mother and do a wonderful job at it, even though he doesn't have a father. But I hope to meet somebody wonderful who will be my best friend, someone whom I can fall in love with and grow old. There are few people who could deal with that. Not only am I a challenge, but my son definitely is."

So how has motherhood changed Ginger Lynn Allen? "Well, I am glad you asked because my outlook has changed. I'm so much more centered and happy. Now I honestly do stop and smell the roses. I notice colors, scents and there is just so much now that I am aware of. It's wonderful. At this point in my life, I am happier than I have ever been mainly because I am comfortable with who I am. I'm very appreciative of everything that I am surrounded by...and enjoying it."

And she means it. The standard sheet/irish TV epoch, which linked Ginger with Charlie Sheen, is over. Her leisure time is partially devoted to charity, particularly "Children of the Night," a project that helps runaways who go into drugs and prostitution. It can provide a home and an education. Sometimes they just want to find a decent family that can get them out of there. I help them with art projects. The last thing I did was pack them up and I take them to AA meetings.

"There was times when I had difficulties, so I am able to relate to a lot of these kids and can put myself into a level that they can understand. They have to know that they can rise above it all and do battle and leave those things behind. I also work with Project Angel, where I either cook food or deliver food to terminally ill patients. I was delivering to an AIDS patient once and we would talk. He would always look forward to seeing me—" [pauses, sniffles] "Once he started crying and I asked him when was the last time he had had a hug, and he said he could use one right now. So I gave him a big hug. He said



T: "Never do anything you don't feel good about." B: As a recurrent "Holy" in the *VICE ACADEMY* series w/ occasional co-star Elizabeth Kattan (left), R: The *VICE* vixen played it straight as *MYPD BLUE*'s Morique

GINGER L. ALLEN

"I hope to meet somebody who'll be my best friend, and with whom I'll fall in love and grow old."

he didn't have much time left." [more silence] "Two days later I went back and he was gone. I found that I wasn't quite strong enough to handle it. It was devastating to me. I hope that I can get the courage to go back and do it again. It really left an impression on me."

Any advice to aspiring strippers? "Never do anything you don't feel good about and always believe in yourself. And never take 'no' for an answer."

And then the woman—who described herself, only five years ago, as "the sacrificial lamb for the entire adult film industry"—shakes my head. And moves on. □



Women: Stories of Passion

THIS TIME AROUND, "THE LUSCIOUS LADIES OF HORROR, FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION" ARE BEHIND THE CAMERA.

BY DAN SCAPPEROTTI

Television's late night wars are heating up. No, I'm not referring to the competition between *Leno*, *Letterman*, *Wayans*, *Grodin* or *The Wussy Guy* (Springer). We're talkin' erotic cable. Zalman King fired the first salvo with his *RED SHOES DIARIES* and then HBO waded-in with *EROTIC CONFESSIONS*. Allying itself with the Showtime network, *Playboy* entered the fray with *WOMEN: STORIES OF PASSION*. But this series was pitched with a gender-bending twist: each half hour episode would be written and directed by a female. Armed with this concept, the producers approached writer Eliza Rothstein who had already talked experience as an executive in the movie and TV mediums. "They had no idea what the framing device would be or anything like that," said Rothstein. "When *Playboy* and Showtime decided to do the series, they contacted me and—quite honestly—I wasn't interested." After all, *DELTA OF*



WOMEN: STORIES OF PASSION Ansel Javer in *City of Men*, a sci-fi episode. Males and females are separated, writing only once a year for a mating ritual

VENUS—a series of short stories that Rothstein adapted into a movie—"wasn't a sterling experience to work on."

Four years ago, when *DELTA OF VENUS* culminated into script problems, Michael Nolan—Rothstein's boss, who hadn't a clue that his employee was a writer—suggested she take a crack at a written summation. "He said, 'We know what we need. We know what we want. We'll just write an outline and then we can hand it off to a writer if we need to.' Not only didn't I tell anybody that I was a writer, I hadn't told anybody that I knew the hook like the back of my hand. I had read it when it was first published in the seventies, when I was 14 years old and living in England. I had extremely liberal parents. I knew it really, really well."

Over the weekend, Rothstein wrote a 25-page outline which Nolan read on Monday morning. "Oh my God, you have to write the script," he decreed. Rothstein speculated New Line's brass wouldn't approve "a poor schlep executive." But



"Let's face it, vampire movies are very sexy. It gives you the ultimate outlet when you deal with horror, fantasy and futuristic stuff."

Nolan, convinced that Rothstein's treatment translated better to film than anything he had seen in six years, supported his employee. "So very much to his credit, they allowed me to write the script," said Rothstein. "It was hard. It was my first script, and I was battling perceptions that I wasn't a real writer because I was an executive on the project. But the irony was that I kept writing, and they kept bringing in other writers but they kept coming back to me.

"The long and the short of it was I had originally written the script for Nicolas Kog to direct. But, at the time when they were finally ready to start shooting it, Nicolas wasn't available. So it went to Zalman King. I was disappointed in the final result. I felt that Zalman took a film that was supposed to be about a

Kelly Dobbin in *Blind Love*, directed by actress Mary Woronov. On the set (l): Cheryl Burke (JUSTIN POWERS) and series creator Elia Rothstein



woman's awakening as a woman—as an artist and as a sexual being—and turned it into a kind of voyeuristic male fantasy. So when Playboy and Showtime approached me about doing *WOMEN*, I thought, "Oh great, what am I going to have to do? Hire Playboy bunnies and pretty much kowtow to the usual exploitative trend?"

Quelling her visions of giggling starlets, Playboy told Rothstein they were serious about tailoring a sensuous series related from a woman's point of view. Quickly putting Playboy to the test, Rothstein insisted upon female directors: "I told them that I wanted to go to people who have a very clear, specific and different vision. If we're doing 26 episodes, then they had to know—right off the bat!—that none of them is going to look like the others. Each one is going to be very unique and individual: the sensibility that is going to be permeating these shows is the independent film world. Imagine that you're seeing little half-hour films, that you might see at Sun-

"There were a lot of women on the crew and functioning as directors: a woman's approach made other women feel comfortable about nudity."

dance or Cannes, and the subject just happens to be sex."

Her enthusiasm proved so infectious that Playboy gave Rothstein the green light to create and executive produce *WOMEN: STORIES OF PASSION*. To qualify the series as a viable product for late night cable, budgets and shooting schedules had to be trimmed. But Rothstein's first problem was developing a concept to link all 26 stories together: "On a low budget anthology show, you really need to have a framing device that's going to give you the maximum flexibility," said Rothstein. "So I was thinking, 'How can you leap over time and space—and do stories that are set in different periods—within the context of the same show?'"

"My initial thought was, 'What if the framing device is a woman who was writing a book about women's fantasies and sexual stories—and every week she's interviewing a different woman?' Whatever stories that woman is telling her could be anything. It could be a story about herself, a fantasy that she had, or it could be a story about her grandmother...whatever! It could be anything. They just loved the idea about doing that."

During the first meeting, when Rothstein proposed her framing device, the producers assumed she'd portray the interviewer. Rothstein gauged her own casting as funny. "But, as time went on, we quickly realized that I was going to be the



The Little Manquin, helmed by horror vet Mary Lambert (R. U. T. Shereen Lakshmi is a vamp who likes to hang around B).

only person who was going to be around this entire production period. So, kind of by default, I actually wound up not only being the creator of the show—and the executive producer—but one of the recurring characters. Which was insane. Utterly insane."

The first nine weeks of production were hectic; they had to do one episode per week. But then things really got crazy; the producers opted to shoot two seasons worth of episodes within a single season. "Suddenly, we were shooting two episodes a week," Rothstein sighed. "We went to what I laughingly call the double team." During earlier meetings with the suits from Playboy and Showtime, someone alluded to a 26-episode package for foreign markets. But, as the project progressed, the amount of episodes dwindled to 13. Rothstein, who'd be responsible for developing the stories, kept probing about the big 26, but was assured—don't worry, he happy—13 was the magic number.

When the show got rolling, Rothstein was afforded only three weeks to generate 13 scripts. Even worse was a major conflict. If Rothstein met with all the personnel, whom she was supposed to interview for the show, her three weeks would be up and she still wouldn't have a script. "So I thought if I invited everybody into one huge meeting—and we went around the table and everyone kicked out their ideas—by the end of that, I could say, 'Okay. You have until tomorrow morning to give me a paragraph on each of your ideas and I'll choose from that.'"

"I had 30 women who came to this enormous meeting at the Playboy office in Beverly Hills. It was hilarious. The day that we had this meeting, they were obviously casting something or doing Playmate interviews. When I went out to get people for the meeting, on one side of the waiting



WOMEN's pilot episode, *Wore Men's Club New?* Tony Rivkin & Colleen McClellan (THE RIGHT THAT NEVER HAPPENED, DEMONIAFF Break the Ice.

area were about 20 women under the age of 20, wearing incredibly short dresses and incredibly high heels with tattoos on various parts of their bodies—and on the other side were all these like radical, intellectual, feminist filmmakers in black leathers. It was hilarious. I wish we'd had a picture of it. When I told the guys from Playboy and Showtime what I was doing, their jaws literally hit the floor and they turned to me and said, 'You could never have 30 men at a meeting sharing ideas' and I said, 'Yeah, I know, that's why this is called WOMEN.'"

While some of the female filmmakers were taken aback by the show's premise, others thought it was fabulous. By the following morning, no less than 60 scenarios littered Rothstein's desk; she discarded all but 20 concepts, eventually subtracting seven for the 13-episode goal. Later

that afternoon, assignments were dispatched: two and a half weeks later, 13 scripts were piled on Rothstein's desk. "It was the first time in Showtime or Playboy history that they started shooting a series with all of their scripts," she explained. "I really wanted to create the feeling that this was an ensemble. Some of these directors knew each other before... and some of the people coming into the meeting were writers who weren't directors. I was hoping if there was a writer there who had an idea, one of the directors—who wasn't a writer—might spark to it and that's exactly what happened."

"It was really terrific because a lot of these women became not only working colleagues but friends. When we were in the post-production phase, we had three or four editors going simultaneously because—as I said—we were shooting

two episodes a week at that point. You would see one director leave her editing bay and go into someone else's, and they'd say, 'You're really got to see this scene. I'm really proud of it.' Or they'd say, 'I'm having trouble with this transition. Come and look at it and tell me what you think.' There was a lot of that interplay. There was competitiveness to some degree but more than anything—because of the way the whole creative process started out—it did feel like an ensemble piece. It felt like a team.

"We'd have meetings, periodically, where we would invite everybody in and just talk about the parameters of what we could and couldn't do...given our budgetary limitations and general taste boundaries. Very much to their credit, I must say both Playboy and Showtime were remarkably non-interfering. They really allowed us what we wanted to do. Yes, there were moments when we had differences of opinion on a script or an actor or whatever but, for the most part, they really backed off. When I said either, 'We can't do this and this is why' or 'We can't do that and this is why' I feel we can't do this, they really would respect that. Because of that, I feel the shows reflect a lot of what I wanted them to. They were from the female point of view, they were from an individual filmmaker's point of view. Some are funny. Some are serious. Some are really hot and some are vaguely erotic. I also wanted to get women of different ages and different color represented, which I was successful in doing. We've done 38 shows and we just completed the third season."

But Rothstein almost hailed out of the third season. While her on-camera role required only a half day to shoot, she was simultaneously working behind-the-scenes with two separate crews to fulfill a two-episode a week quota. "I kept saying, 'Remember, if I'm work-

ing on-camera on Tuesday, don't schedule me to work on the same day," she recalled. "Three or four times, it happened by accident I'd would be working on-camera, on two different shows, on the same day. I was putting over 500 miles a week on my car driving between locations because we shot primarily on locations. We shot in houses out at Malibu, we shot at a ranch in the Santa Clarita Valley, we shot at state parks and we shot a lot of the third season at the Lacy Street Studios in downtown Los Angeles. One show would be shooting at Lacy Street and one show would be shooting at Malibu. It was insane. I was spending so much time in my car. For the third season, I am not on-camera—which was a godsend."

"Even though many years ago I had started out being an actress, I really hate being on-camera. I did a lot of theatre and loved that because there is an interaction with the audience. When you're on-camera, it's like you're under a microscope. I also found that because I was wearing so many hats on the show, I just couldn't switch off my executive producer hat or anything. So this season starts off with the actress speaking directly to the camera. My concept on that was let the audience become the interviewer."

It was during the third season that Rothstein rewarded directors with more than low salaries: as a bonus, she added creative incentives. Directors who could moonlight as scribes were encouraged to write and helm their own scripts. She also offered actresses an opportunity to sit in the director's chair: indie diva Mary Woronof (3:1), a veteran of the indie industry (SUGAR COOKIES, HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD, EATING RAOUL), wrote and directed *The Little Vampire*, *Blind Love* and *The Gypsy*, her directing credits



Worow Thinking: Kate Rodgers (POISON IVY 2) is joined by a genie (Scotty Ellis Lang). Directed by actress Valerie Lavanchy, series creator Eliza Rothstein notes, "We were successful. I think the concrete moments are hilarious and the sex is very easy."

were supplemented with the *Astral Erot* episode. "I met Mary through one of my line producers, a wonderful woman named Marisel Pagianna," recounted Rothstein. "She's developing a project with Mary called *VAMPIRE CULT QUEENS FROM HELL* (with Barbara Leigh & Barbara Steele). I knew Mary's work as an actor. Marisel introduced me to her. And she is such a kick that I thought I had to give this woman a shot. I used a lot of people who may have done one student film before, and who I thought had an incredible vision or a great story. The thing about Mary, and we joke about this, is there's a parallel universe called the World of Woronof where everything is slightly larger than life and slightly off center. It's almost as if she does these fractured fairy tales."

"I think the first episode she did for me was called *Blind Love*, about a shy stripper who—if you can believe it—can't get a date. Of course, she's surrounded by these women who are just glowing with sexuality and she's kind of the oddball. She comes up with this quasi-comedic routine because she's not as pretty or as sexy as the other girls. A computerist gives her a man's number and suggests she try phone sex: if she can't get a date, at least she can get her motor running. So she

were able to use some of them within the art design and production in the show. Her paintings have a similar quality to what I was just describing. There's a lyricism to them but just a little off kilter—with just a hint of darkness to it. She was a real find. Since she was an actor herself, she was real good working with actors. Probably better than anyone I've met in Hollywood. Mary is the least bullshit. She does not sugarcoat anything. If she needed an actor or an actress to do something in a love scene and they weren't getting it, she would get down on the bed and show them what she wanted. Or if someone was giving her a hard time about nudity, she'd like pull her shirt up and say, 'You want me to get naked too?' It was very refreshing."

Oscar nominee/FF cover woman Sally Kirkland (3:1) starred in the *Motel Magic* episode as an author suffering from writer's block. Abandoning her family, she checks into a secluded beach & breakfast that wields mystical powers. Hearing a couple in the next room making wild, intense love, Kirkland's character passes through the walls and is driven to participate in the lusty union. Later, she sees her sex partners exit their suite as an elderly couple; their love life was rekindled by the room.

Kirkland directed *Loose*

Series producer/writer Eliza Rothstein & actress/director Sally Kirkland perform on-camera in *Wife Protection*, another episode directed by Val Landburg.



"When most women fantasize, they're not these elaborate \$40 million productions. For a lot of women, it's about the small moments."

From *Another Planet*, an episode shot for the third season though the actress and Rothstein asked Showtime to swap air dates with *Motel Magic*. "Sally is unique," said Rothstein. "She's lovably nuts. But she's phenomenal at working with actors. Like Mary, if somebody didn't understand something or couldn't get a handle on a scene, Sally would be right in there showing them, bit by bit, what to do. She got performances out of her actors in her episode that are simply amazing."

Valerie Landsburg, an actress who's resume includes recurrent roles on TV series (e.g. the original *FAME*, 1982), is the most prolific director in the *WOMEN* unit series. Her track record includes no less than seven episodes (*Motel Magic*, *Father & Son*, *Hot Trick*, etc.). A rapport was forged between Landsburg and *WOMEN*'s executive producer after Rothstein organized a California group called *Cinewomen*, a non-profit organization for women in show business. While trying to plug a hole for a first season director, one of Rothstein's friends advised the exec to interview Landsburg. "Her tape really didn't show me anything about what she could do," said Rothstein. "But we had such a phenomenal meeting, and I got such a good feeling from her, that I asked her to do it. She wound up being one of my star directors. She was just so competent."

Landsburg also wrote



What'd I Think? Kate Padgett & Richard Young (l) filmed by director of photography Mark Shapiro (r). "These erotic episodes were the ones I had the hardest time convincing Playboy and Showtime to do," says Elina Rothstein.



two episodes that she directed, *Troop* and *The Bitter and the Sweet*; the latter was nominated for an ACE Award. "Because Mary and Sally and Val come from in front of the camera," noted Rothstein, "they understand the vulnerability of the actors, where they are not only emotionally naked but—in this case—physically naked as well. Like Mary

and Sally, Val would get right in there. The big thing on the set was, 'Is there anybody on the crew who has not seen Valerie's breasts?' because she would periodically lift up her shirt and flash you."

Naturally, nudity was a prerequisite to draw viewers, but Rothstein's insistence on strong characterizations disarmed the spi-

ans—unaccustomed to disrobement—that they were proven in another exploitation quickie. According to Rothstein, actors were judged by their dramatic aptitude—not surgical enhancement: "It was difficult, because doing nudity is difficult under any circumstances. But because there were a lot of women on the crew and functioning as directors, a women's approach made other women feel comfortable about nudity, which I think is unique. I've had actors who have done the show for me who have been approached about doing either staff for Playboy or Showtime, and have turned it down. Others had done small low-budget films for Playboy where there was nudity involved, and they said it was just so different a world. I think a lot of that was because I'm very, very sensitive to the way people feel on a set, both the actors and the crew. If people aren't comfortable, it's going to show in their work. So we took great pains that people felt comfortable and understood."

Writing several episodes sans screen credit, Rothstein is acknowledged for her *Paradise Found* episode, which she also directed: "It's sort of a modern *BELLE DE JOUR* story. The original story, with Catherine Deneuve, was about a sort of repressed upscale housewife who has fantasies about working as a prostitute and goes to work in this upscale whorehouse. During the day, she works as a whore and at night she goes home to her sort of regular placid lifestyle. I thought there were huge flaws in the original, but I was intrigued by the story, itself. The one I wrote is really about a woman exploring her sexual dark side, not because there was anything wrong with her—or she felt she had to be punished for it—but because it was an unacknowledged part of herself that she felt she needed to give life and breath to. There's a metaphor running through

the script about her wanting to get back to a time when women's sexuality was something to be celebrated and she kind of uses the metaphor of 'Eve before the apple.' Eve was Adam's equal, and that's kind of the place that she wants to get back to."

It was on the set of *Paradise Found* that Rothstein was burdened with her most difficult experience as a director: it was at the end of a hard day and the episode's star, Cara Kavanagh, declined to peel down to her birthday suit for the nth time. "By the end of the script and the end of the journey, Cara's character is standing in front of this full-length mirror," Rothstein explained. "She's ready to finally get naked, both literally and metaphorically, so that she can return to her marriage with all this information that she's gained about herself. It had been a very long day and we had shot a lot of love scenes, and by the time that we got to this shot, Cara—who is gorgeous and incredibly talented—was really balking. She didn't want to do it."

"It was just a shot where Cara drops her robe, looks at herself in the mirror, reaches out and touches her mirror image. I had to say to her, 'Look, Cara, I understand it's been a rough day and you're tired. But this is so important for the script. I wouldn't ask you to do it if I didn't think it was absolutely necessary. In order for this character to have gone through the journey she's gone through, and be ready to return to her marriage, she has to be willing to go back to being Eve—and Eve was naked. I'm not going to be lingering on the mirror. In fact, I'll probably only use the moment where you drop the robe and look at yourself, then I'm going to punch in tighter as you reach to touch yourself in the mirror"—which is what I wound up doing in the editing. She was very nervous about doing it. She had to understand it wasn't about



Anna Horowitz and Bernard White in *World of Women*, directed by Mary McCormack. "In my opinion, there's a general consensus called the World of Women," says Ellen Rothstein. "Everything is slightly larger than life and slightly off-camera."

"I want to see your crotch," it was about the power of that image. Looking at herself in the mirror, totally naked, is what I needed for the metaphor of Eve to pay off.

"Right after that, a hand comes into the shot and you think it's going to be another client, because it takes place in a room where we've seen all her encounters as a whore. But it's her husband and he's naked as well. You totally see them as Adam and Eve, and they're starting fresh. So once Cara understood why I needed it, and what the context was, she was fine. It's such a beautiful moment in the piece and it was very, very tough to get. I don't think a lot of male directors would have taken the time to explain why it was necessary. There was a lot of symbolism involved. She was willing to go there for me. I think that, ultimately, when you are doing erotica—when you are doing nudity—your

actors have to feel that they're not just bodies in space. That's why I think the series works so well, and why we're getting such good ratings. If you took the nudity out, you'd still have strong stories and strong characters. It's not just about sex."

So why is WOMEN's erotica so appealing to females? Rothstein points to the series' genesis, a pilot script called *Warm Hands Cold Heart*: Colleen McDermott starred as Greta, whose attempt to balance a personal life and career is nothing less than dysfunctional. When her spouse persuades her to take a respite for their anniversary, Greta consults a Russian masseuse to rekindle her romantic flame. It was director Landsburg's debut episode, and something of a family affair, what with a cast that included her husband and their two pug dogs. "Since it was the first script I think

Showtime and Playboy were shocked at how hot it was," said Rothstein. "I don't think they expected me to go as far as I did with it. When it was finished, every woman who saw it—and there was a whole contingent of women at Showtime and Playboy, what with the secretaries and assistants that work for these guys—pretty much every woman who has seen it has just gone age shit over it."

"I think it is very, very much a female fantasy. I think the reason it is so popular with women is because it's about a married woman having a fantasy about somebody, other than her husband, but returning to her marriage. The ambiguity as to what is going on in her head, and what is going on in actuality."

Episodes have been influenced by the science fiction and horror genres. Written and directed by Adele Bertel-Cocchi, *City of Men* is a futuristic fable of a totalitarian state where males are unified in one city, and females in another, both sexes meet only once a year for a mating ritual. Mary Wornon's *The Little Vampire* delves into the conflicting relationships between vampire and victim. *Voodoo* offers Daphnee Duplax as a doctor who practices in a women's clinic her dreams are plagued by images of a weird ceremony. *Love From Another Planet* involves a woman, becoming more estranged from her trailer park husband, who finds solace in a very close encounter. A central character in *Wishful Thinking* is a genie.

Though prohibited from sexual exploration in their routine lives, Rothstein's WOMEN are afforded the latitude to probe their libidos in a "fantasy" context. "And that's the point of fantasy," said the series' creator. "That I have found in talking to, and dealing with, literally hundreds of women over three seasons of this show. I think because women don't have as many outlets in everyday life and

society to explore their fantasies, we've gotten very good at having these internal films in our head of what we would want.

"I think that is because of images that women have been surrounded with over the years—like BARBAR-ELLA and vampire movies. Let's face it, vampire movies are very sexy, there's obvious sexual undercurrents, explored or not, on the screen. I think it gives you the ultimate outlet when you're dealing with fantasy or futuristic stuff or horror or whatever it is. It's taking a familiar genre and putting a spin on it.

"I think when most women fantasize, they're not these elaborate \$40 million productions. I think that, for a lot of women, it's about the small moments. It's about the intimate moments, being with someone you could never be with in real life. Doing something with someone that you might not do in real life. Some women may have a fascination with bondage, but that doesn't mean they're going to go to the dungeon and get strapped up to the wall or pick up a whip and start dominating guys. I think women tend to go in one of two directions when they're fantasizing. It's just an extension of who



T. Inspired by Sally Kirkland, trailer park wife Amy Lindsay finds solace with her Lover from Another Planet. R. Colleen McDermott in the Mann Meno pilot. "Showtime and Playboy were shocked at how hot it was. It was a female fantasy."

"Every woman who saw it went ape shit over it. If you took the nudity out, you'd still have strong stories & characters. It's just not about sex."

they are and not a far cry from that. When women think about sexuality or fantasize, there's a great tendency for that fantasy to have an element of humor or whimsy—and I think that men take sex very seriously. But the comedic episodes were the ones that I had the hardest time convincing Playboy and Showtime to do. I think the humor made them nervous. How can you combine two genres—eroticism and humor—and still have the humor be funny and still have the sex be sexy? That was why I was so thrilled that Val [Landsburg] did *Wishful Thinking*, because I think that we were successful. I think the comedic moments are hilarious and I think the sex is very sexy." □



THE GUNS OF EL CHUPACABRA

DON JACKSON'S CINEMA: NO WARDROBE, NO SCRIPT. PLOT: STARLETS AS FAST FOOD.

BY CRAIG REID

Last time we talked to B-film auteur Donald G. Jackson (8-7), he was an avowed practitioner of Zen filmmaking aka spontaneous creation (translation: he shoots movies sans script). Though our coverage of the "Don" was less than flattering, he invited me to attend a shoot of **THE GUNS OF EL CHUPACABRA**. In addition to exploitation empress Julie Strain, the cast included a cluster of babes who are meal inspected by the *chupacabra*, i.e. a carnivorous, crustacean monster with an insatiable appetite for naked starlets. If you subscribe to legend, the *chupacabra* dines on goats. But, and I'm foreshadowing here (page 59), what's gonna move more video units? A monster eating barnyard critters, or a monster poking its teeth with a 35D hiking top?

I met Jackson at his Hollywood International Multimedia office. A couple of cute ingenues, seated near his desk, were being briefed on the next Jackson movie. I'm speculating it'll be an addendum to his **HELL COMES TO FROGTOWN** trilogy or still another sequel in his **ROLLERBLADE WAREHOUSES** series. So I ask Jackson if all this stuff about talking frogs (i.e. human/amphibian hybrids) and girls on skates constituted some kind of fetish...

"No, it's not a fetish, it's a reason for making a movie," grumbled the producer/director. "It's a creature feature. Why did I write **FROGTOWN** as a post-

apocalyptic tale about humans transforming into frogs? Because, back then, no one would pay any attention when I tried to promote and get a deal on Kevin Eastman's Teenage Mutant *Ninja Turtles*. Nobody cared. I took it to some important people, including executives at Roger Corman's New World. I showed them the artwork and they said, 'It's crude, it'll go nowhere.' So I couldn't produce the *Turtles* movie, a sort of **HELL COMES TO TURTLETOWN**. I couldn't do 'talking apes' because it had been done, so the idea was to do frogs."

So why opt for **EL CHUPACABRA**? It was pure serendipity according to Scott Shaw, the film's producer. "Don and I were down in Mexico to do a movie called the **GUNS OF BABA**, and were scouting locations. We kept hear-



ing about these *chupacabras*. We got to this weird road and noticed strange dead animals along the roadside. So it's five in the evening and there was three cars down the road. Suddenly, something apparently ran across the road causing the first car to flip over. We stopped. Don has a bad hip, so I grabbed

feeding choice female food (Strain).



Julie Strain as Queen B. "We did lots of ad-libbing. It's hilarious. I battle a *chupacabra* wearing G' rated heels."



Captured by a hungry *chupacabra*, Tyler *is* Olesca *is* sweet *it* eat *is* a desert habitat. *It's* likely they'll be *cooking*—*literally*. "I do *made* modeling on the side, so I'm *uncomfortable* with my *sexuality*," reassured Olesca.



the camera and start helping people out while trying to shoot things. The people swore it was a chupacabra that made the car flip. Don and I looked at each other—'Shit!'—so then we just decided to change the film title from 'Bats' to GUNS OF EL CHUPACABRA. So instead of being a [Sam] Peckinpah shoot-em-up kind of movie,

it is now an *EL MARIACHI Meets A Creature Feature From the Black Lagoon*."

The legend's expansion into the mainstream has prompted other filmmakers to prep their own adaptations of the entity. *Chupacabra*, which translates from Spanish into "goat sucker," has been mythically rendered into a predator

that sucks the blood and internal organs from its prey. *Chupacabra* sightings, initially chronicled in Puerto Rico and Costa Rica, have spread to Mexico, North Africa, Honduras, the United States, Italy and Spain. An episode of *THE X-FILES* summarized that chupacabras were human beings plagued by an enzyme

that accelerated fungal growth on the skin, thus precipitating deformities.

Jackson and Shaw have afforded themselves some serious latitude in their own spin-off of the legend. And while Jackson lost the option on *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, he gained the franchise's creator, Kevin Eastman, who co-stars with

L. Babe barbecue: *Necked Lighting*, Chu, *well* source Olesca *is* Cesare *is* Don Jackson's *ROCK N ROLL COP* (194). *Just* Lunar Strain, *Control* Brooks, *Wing*





his spouse, the aforementioned Jube Stram. Shaw explained, "My character, Jack-be-Quick Space Sheriff, Intergalactic Marshall, is sent down to Earth by Queen B [Stram] and King Allmedia [Eastman] to hunt down and destroy the chupacabras which were unleashed on the planet by Z-Man, Lord Invader [Robert Z'Dar]. We also have Men in Black searching for the chupacabra and they don't know if it's an alien, monster or genetic experiment gone bad. But the way we play it off, it's actually an alien's pet that got loose. We add in another comic book twist by adding in these Mexican wrestlers, the ones who wear masks. Ours is called the Santiago Kid [Herri Estrada]." Sounds to me like **THE THREE STOOGES IN ORBIT** meets **CANNONBALL KUN** meets **SUPERGIANT**. On acid.

And what's the price tag for this confection? "I don't like to quote budgets because there's no way I can give a satisfactory answer," said Jackson. "If I lie like some people and say it costs \$7,000—well, I think it was Hitler who said, 'The bigger the lie, the more people will believe it.' [The \$7,000 movie is supposedly fabricated budget for Robert Rodriguez's **EL MARIACHI**. Everyone in Hollywood knows Hitler was right on this one.] I really don't know

7. Goddess transforms into Jackson's fellow-stunt girl, a Kalkreuth Starliner ("No, it's not a fetish," denies Jackson. "It's a reason for making a movie."). 8. "In this film, I bent up the alien guy," says Izzy Odessa. 9. A Chupacabra and alien "meal" (expect) prospective diners, Tyler and Dee. "I'm okay with nudity," says Dee.



the budget because I'm spending money on it every day. It's a pay-as-you-go kind of thing.

"I make films to please me and not someone else. We also have our own distribution company, so now we can sell the movie. We put together a quick trailer and showed it at film markets last year, and got great responses."

Eager to link Julie Strain to the movie, Jackson brought up the "b" word when requesting a compromise on salary. "Don—I previously worked with him on three of his films—told me they were on a budget," related Strain. He said, "We'd really like to have you on the project." I said, "You know what? If you cast my husband Kevin, I'll do this for free." Don said, "Oh gee, that's great." Then they started working on the storyline. We later waited a whole hour to meet Don and Scott, finally showing up, they said that they were in a grocery store parking lot writing our script, making up our characters. Kevin was in full armor from head to toe. I battle these chupacabras in 6" metal heels."

The budget didn't cover wardrobe expenses for a supportive cast of starlets, who were only wearing tans. Stalked in the desert by a hungry chupacabra, the youthful ladies are captured, incarcerated within oversize bird cages or chicken wire cells, and sweat it out until they're literally cooked and served as dinner. Shaw insists the premise is harmless. "If you see STARSHIP TROOPERS, the movie is very ill spirited. I mean the bugs are sucking brain juices out of people. There is just death and corpses everywhere. We are not mean spirited nor blood-and-guts people. Things are implied."

And why aren't the filmmakers adhering to the historical concept of chupacabras chowing-down on goats? "Visual interest," snapped Jackson. "Naked girls are a cheaper special

"I fire some guns & hang out in the nude. They wouldn't let me put on my clothes! I don't identify with the character because it's a Don Jackson film—you can't!"



Director Don Jackson, co-star/producer Scott Shaw, Julie Strain and Kevin Sarasin. "With no scripts, it's great," says Strain. "Everybody is winging it."

effect. Plus, I think it adds another audience to the film."

Some of the naked lunch requested billing under pseudonyms. "My husband heard from a friend about this film," said Dee, who was born in Puerto Rico and raised in Queens. She moved to L.A. six years ago. "I thought it would be fun to try it. It won't hurt anyone. I play this girl who is trapped with Tyler in a cage, while an alien and chupacabra taunt us. I do a lot of screaming. It's okay that I don't have lines, because I don't want to goof up my first time. I do nudity and I'm okay with that. I've never posed nude for a magazine, but I have always been comfortable with my body."

Odessa, also cast as a blue-plate special, responded to my query about her phony name with a blunt "Why not?" No qualms about performing her entire role in the buff? "It's my

first film and I don't think it will be my last," shrugged Odessa, who earned a degree in nutrition and, upon moving to L.A. with her boyfriend, turned to modeling. "But I don't want to be an actress. I've no passion for it. It's fun, but I'm just doing it to pay the bills. In this movie, I beat up the alien guy, fire some guns and hang out in the nude. They wouldn't let me put on my clothes. I do nude modeling on the side, so I'm comfortable with my sexuality. I really don't identify with the character because it's a Don Jackson movie—you can't! He just tells you your words right away and you say them."

Jackson is the first to admit, "It's all pretty funny. Looking back about 20 years ago, the first movie I ever did was a creature film with naked girls. [THE DEMON LOVER] Shaw denies the rumor that Jackson cut off his thumb so he could sink

the insurance money into the film.] Now it has come full circle and I am doing a creature movie with naked girls. I don't know why this year. I don't particularly like horror movies or have any interest in them. I don't even go see them."

Jackson's professes a fondness for Bolivian filmmaker Alejandro Jodorowsky (EL TOPO) and Robert Englund's ground breaking electric Western ZACHARIAH. Orson Welles, Sergio Leone, Sam Fuller. He deflects critical vilification of his movies with, "All the stories have been told. Stories can be too confining. I think we simplify it. Like a lot of my work, parts of THE GUNS OF CHUPACABRA will be confusing, normal and mysterious. It's all about audience manipulation. I get tired of the MTV-style of cutting, and sometimes I will just go and do a shot for ten minutes that holds for a while. Plus, I don't shoot everything from a hundred different angles. We map it as it goes along. In part two of our EL CHUPACABRA trilogy, we don't do any master shots at all."

"Another thing is that we don't have scripts," reaffirmed Shaw.

"No scripts?"
"No scripts," he repeated.
"It's Zen filmmaking," continued Jackson. "Scripts are good for multi-million dollar pictures, where you have to go through an agent to get some big actor interested. I have fired script supervisors. Good ones document what you do. Bad ones ask too many questions and interrupt daily flow."

Julie Strain rhapsodized Zen filmmaking. "With no scripts, we do a lot of ad libbing. It's not uncomfortable when you're with people you know. You realize that your work is going to be better because of it, and you just go with it. It's great, everybody is winging it. You know like two sentences of the storyline, but you come up with ten minutes of film in just one scene and all the

continued on page 48



Tina Krause
in
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EL CHUPACABRA

continued from page 30
actors walk away doing some of their best work ever. It's really a fabulous style of filmmaking."

Jackson invites film apprentices and aspiring actors to come try Zen filmmaking. "I am looking for people who will trust my guidance, and will enjoy being in a movie surrounded by huge talent. Getting your face on a video box cover or goes further in landing acting jobs than any head shot. We can provide that. When I got off the bus in 1981, people would line up to be in a men-union independent film. Now most would rather be a B&G extra for a lot less money than be a star in an independent. People used to let you use their house or place of business for cheap, but now all they want is a lot of money for the exposure. They would rather sit stay empty until a studio wants to pay them \$20,000 dollars for the use."

"Actors before just wanted some tape for their reel, money wasn't as important as experience and exposure and making contacts for the future. I would love to write a

book on guerrilla filmmaking, but you can't appreciate it unless you have been there. We started our own distribution company because we were tired of creating our projects and then having to sign them away a distributor line and tells you your movie is so good, even though they're making a fortune from it. The bottom line is if you can't sell the movie you can't make the movie."

Now, I don't buy the Zen thing and I still don't understand the stuff about roller-blading coquettes and frogs that talk too much. But in a town that bows to TITANIC's edgy of extravagance—"bigger is better"—you got to admire Donald G. Jackson. Hollywood's last angry man. □

FATALE ATTRACTIONS
continued from page 7

"We've kept in close contact. Because Stahl is a suspense thriller and isn't loaded with dialogue, we were able to focus on my developing a relationship with the camera. We thought it would be a rather comfortable environment for my first movie. The goal was to develop a rapport

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FF cover woman Meagan Kelley (47) wears only a pleated capris and a teeny bikini in The New Surfing Brevier, a French pin-up publication, the magazine is illustrated with photos of horror/fantasy stars clad in abbreviated swimwear. In addition to American bombshells (J.J. North, Jane Wilkinson, Linda Blaz, et al), there's a surfeit of

Hammer beauties (Caroline Munro, Ingrid Pitt, Julie Kays, et al) on display. The aforementioned Ms. Kelley graces the front and back covers. Send inquiries to Gerard Noel, 345, Rue Pablo Picasso, 46000 Cahors, France.

● Congratulations to FF centerfold, Tiffany Sheps (5-12 & 6) Her performance in SHAMPOO HORNS, an indie directed by Manuel Toldano, was rewarded with not only laudatory reviews but a multiple theatrical release in New York. Scripts is currently filming SCATTERED LIMBS, an "action drama" helmed by John Vincent Vargas. She'll subsequently slip into PIGSKIN LOVE for director Gene Miller. □

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LETTERS

"LESBIAN ASSASSINS"

Love your mag! Please refer to your Letters page (Vol. 6, No. 12), specifically the "Read—Jane Bend" submission by one Kate Dyer. Ms. Dyer describes "an amazing British film about Sylvia Koscina and Eike Semmer as bikini-clad assassins who wipe-out leering agents." These chicks were hot. Unfortunately, she omitted the film's title! Could you fill it in? This whole thing sounds familiar. Wasn't there a lesbian bond between the women?

Suzanne Heywood
Madison, WI

[The 1966 film is titled *DEADLIER THAN THE MALE*. According to researchist/writer James L. Lombacher, "Eike Semmer and Sylvia Koscina are deadly lesbian assassins in that *Baldur Brundage* mystery..."]

AND WILLARD SCOTT ALREADY SCOPPED US

Are you apathetic or lazy? Maybe it's so much sake! I'm sure circulation won't suffer, but what about pride in your product? What happened to the "visions" and bawdy reporting? You are out of touch with who's hot, who's hot out-of-the-past and who will be hot tomorrow. Here are a few cover ideas: Allison Hayes, Gloria Holden, Fay Wray, Simone Simon, Elsa Lanchester, Dana Wynter, etc. And for something a little different, Uda O'Connor and Maria Ouspenskaya.

Michael Hayko
Los Angeles, CA

[Mr. Hayko, we're not hot—we're nuclear. And our "visions" is hardly mystic; we cover today's *A-listed*, *drive-in* drama, female producers/directors and icons from past generations (sample our cover stories on Bettie Page, Mommie Dee Doren, Jeanne Carmen and Pamela Green. And check-out next issue's front cover.)

But you've looked "who's hot" with very senior citizens, some of whom—if they were older today—would be 117-122 years old. Let's compromise; we'll continue to cover post-50 females as long as you acknowledge that movies are now shot in sound—and frequently in color.]

THE 1967 REVUE

The past year as review. My favorite *FF* issue of 1997: Bettie Page (6.10/11), it's just glorious what with the Bettie, Russ Meyer, Dave Friedman and Arge Dickenson interviews (also loved the dialogue with "toddlers" Sarah Gellar, Jennifer L. Hewitt, Karina Lombard and—holy Hades!—Charlene Theron).

The article on the director's cut of *KISS ME DEADLY* packed a wallop. I knew nothing about an "unsaid ending," and this is my favorite noir movie.

My favorite '97 cover-fold is Alexander Keith (6.7): a genuine femme fatale—infinitely more gutsy & sly than in her previous incarnation. My favorite ('97) article may very well be dark horse:

Jim Wynorski's homage to the '50s and '60s with his list of Top 10 bombshells (6.8). Dan Scoppetelli's interviews with Gita Seraphin (5.8) and Pete Wilson (6.2) and Marnie Van Doren (5.8, the latter profile is tart but loving) Amelia Kinkade's "Amelia in Wonderland" (6.2), entitled "It's about Julie Newmar, *Thriller*, *ambo* barbeque, *leaky plumbing*, *books* and *my steppar* in *Hotel Hell!*" Ari Bass' "Vegas Venue: Viviana and Jim Varney" (6.6) and Jennifer Huss' "Return to the Blue Lagoon" (6.5), both equally riotous. Steven Lehti's interview with Rose McGowan (6.6), Doug Eby's interview with the amazing Reese Witherspoon (5.8). Alan Jones' conversation with Cameron Diaz (6.6). Laura Schiff's interview with Nancy Allen (6.7) and just about anyone else she talks to: her "Silent Screen" (6.8) was bone-chilling. Tim Groves' "The Starlet That Time Forgot" (5.8) as well as his interview with Shirley Eaton (5.10). Craig Belfrage rap with Carmen Electra (5.6), Sherry Hopper on the imperment of female directors (5.12), Mark Altman's 50 sexiest Bond sidekicks (6.6). Congrats to Doree Peterson and Jan Dean for their fiery, exquisite photography.

One thing would love to see a beautiful blast from the



Readers are always insistent that actress *FF* cover woman *Bette Stevens* (*NIGHTMARE EDITION*) make a comeback on a *FF* cover.

past—Brinke Stevens—back on the *FF* bullpen.

In an issue, devoted to Sci-Fi's *Sexy 50* (1998), on the works?

Jerry Britman
St. Petersburg, FL

[Our annual "Sci-Fi/Sexy 50" issue, this time titled and written by Laura Schiff, will debut in mid-summer.]

DIGNITY

I always eagerly await Laura Schiff's indispensable "Fetish Attractions"; it seems to be the only source of info for forthcoming genre releases such as *SHOPPING FOR FANGE*, *BLAZOR BLADE SMILE*, *BLOOD-THIRSTY*, etc. My only complaint? How about updated info related to the release of these indies? And where will they be accessible (video, oshh, *FF*), whatsoever?

What most impressed me about *FF* is the quality and taste of the writing. In addition to covering A-talent, *FF* takes a dignified approach to low-budget films which corporate Hollywood still doesn't dignify. Your articles are informative and entertaining.

It's cool how you not only spotlight cut actresses (Bette Eby, Julie Smith and the budding chick of all, Jacqueline Lovell), but you also involve many females in the creative process; this all tops out nat-

ural creative resources and provides for detailed, first-hand accounts of the genre scene. Keep up the good work and, oh yeah, the pictures work for me, too.

Monte Morgan
Johnson City, TN

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